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DON STRONG
OF THE WOLF PATROL

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"He came down to the ground and ate his luncheon."

[PAGE 210]

DON STRONG *of the* WOLF PATROL

by

WILLIAM HEYLIGER

Author of

"Don Strong—Patrol Leader"

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers*

NEW YORK

by arrangement with D. Appleton & Co.

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Printed in the United States of America

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FOREWORD

Tempting boys to be what they should be—giving them in wholesome form what they want—that is the purpose and power of Scouting. To help parents and leaders of youth secure *books boys like best* that are also best for boys, the Boy Scouts of America organized EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY. The books included, formerly sold at prices ranging from $1.50 to $2.00 but, by special arangement with the several publishers interested, are now sold in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition at $1.00 per volume.

The books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY were selected by the Library Commission of the Boy Scouts of America, consisting of George F. Bowerman, Librarian, Public Library of the District of Columbia; Harrison W. Craver, Director, Engineering Societies Library, New York City; Claude G. Leland, Superintendent, Bureau of Libraries, Board of Education, New York City; Edward F. Stevens, Librarian, Pratt Institute Free Library, Brooklyn, N. Y., and Franklin K. Mathiews, Chief Scout Li-

brarian. Only such books were chosen by the Commission as proved to be, by *a nation wide canvas,* most in demand by the boys themselves. Their popularity is further attested by the fact that in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition, more than a million and a quarter copies of these books have already been sold.

We know so well, are reminded so often of the worth of the good book and great, that too often we fail to observe or understand the influence for good of a boy's recreational reading. Such books may influence him for good or ill as profoundly as his play activities, of which they are a vital part. The needful thing is to find stories in which the heroes have the characteristics boys so much admire—unquenchable courage, immense resourcefulness, absolute fidelity, conspicuous greatness. We believe the books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY measurably well meet this challenge.

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA,

James E. West

Chief Scout Executive.

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DON STRONG OF THE WOLF PATROL

CHAPTER I

DONALD RECEIVES A JOLT

MRS. STRONG called from the hot kitchen:

"Donald!"

The boy, poring over a baseball score-book in the cool dining-room, arose from his chair, rebelliously.

"Yes, mother?"

"Call father to supper, please."

"Gosh!" the boy said to himself. "A fellow can't sit down a minute."

In the carpenter shop in the basement of the house his father was working at a bench.

"Supper is ready, dad," said Donald.

Mr. Strong sighed and straightened his back. The August day had been hot and he was tired. He looked about the shop in a discouraged sort of way.

"This floor ought to be swept," he said.

Donald nodded his head as though he agreed. The floor was thick with wood-shavings. A broom stood in one corner. But Donald, after kicking one foot back and forth through the shavings, turned his back and went upstairs.

"Hurry, Donald!" said his mother. "You just have time enough to wash."

"Always making a fellow do something," Donald grumbled. He was the last of the family to come to the table.

"Late again, Don," said his sister Barbara.

"You forgot to comb your hair, Don," smiled his sister Beth.

Donald scowled. His sisters, he thought, were always picking at him. He took little

part in the talk that ran around the supper table. Barbara had spent the afternoon mending, and Beth had brought a slight addition to the family treasury by waiting on customers at the village bakery.

"Where were you all afternoon, Don?" his father asked.

"Oh, around," Donald answered vaguely.

"What doing?"

"Playing ball."

"That's all he's ever doing," said Barbara.

Donald bristled. "What do you want me to do, sew buttonholes?"

"No," said Barbara; "but you might help fa——"

"Barbara!" cried Mrs. Strong.

Beth, the peacemaker, smiled at her brother. "Who won, Don?"

"We did," the boy answered. "The other side wouldn't have scored a run if Alex Davidson had been catching me. But Alex's never around any more."

"Maybe he helps his mother," said Barbara.

Donald scowled again. He wondered if Barbara was encouraging his father to keep him out of high school. That would be just like Barbara, he thought—spoiling a fellow's fun.

In truth, it was only as fun that the Chester High School appealed to Donald. He was thinking of the fact that Mr. Wall, the Latin teacher, was a corking good coach, and that all high school teams were uniformed. He wanted to play end on the football team; he wanted to pitch for the nine.

After supper, while his sisters helped with the dishes, he wandered forth with his hands in his pockets. On one of the village roads he met Ted Carter, the high school first-baseman.

"How about it?" Ted asked.

Donald shook his head. "Don't know yet."

"Davidson's coming," Ted announced.

"Davidson?" Donald was astonished. "Why, everybody says what a hard time he and his mother have and——"

"He's coming just the same," Ted insisted. "He told me himself. Gee, if he can come, you ought to be able to make it."

That was what Donald thought, too. He had a father and Davidson hadn't. He walked home grumpy and out of sorts. He wondered if Barbara *was* advising that he be sent to work in the mill.

"She'd better mind her own business," he muttered.

When he reached home he went in through the rear entrance. In the kitchen his mother was mixing bread for the next day's baking. Barbara, busy as usual, was mending an apron.

"It wouldn't hurt you to fill the wood-box," she said.

"Barbara!" warned Mrs. Strong. She turned to the boy. "Father's on the porch. He wants to see you, Donald."

Donald went out to the porch. His father sat in the darkest place.

"Sit down, Don," he said.

The boy dropped into the nearest chair. He noticed that his father looked more tired than usual, and had an uncomfortable feeling that this interview wasn't going to be pleasant.

"We're going to let you enter high school," said his father.

Donald gave the chair a sudden tilt that almost upset it. "O dad!" he cried in glee. Now he *could* pitch for the nine!

The man nodded. "Yes; you can go." He was silent a moment. "I wonder if you understand what this means?" he asked. "I don't suppose you do."

Donald scraped one foot along the porch floor and said nothing.

"I may be making a mistake," his father went on. "You've never shown much liking for books. In fact, you haven't shown much

liking for anything—except play. But mother and I feel that there may be something in you that hasn't shown itself yet. We feel that you ought to get your chance in life. So we are going to let you enter for a year."

"Only one year?" said Donald.

"We can hardly afford that," said his father. "As it is, there will be many a tight squeeze. I understand that high school has its social side, class societies and class dances. I'm afraid you'll have to keep all that out of your head. I don't think you'll find Alex at dances, for he won't have any money to throw away. He's paying his way through."

"Where—where did Alex get the money?" Donald asked.

"Working for farmers, hoeing the fields and cutting brush. You said at supper you didn't see him around any more. That's the reason he hasn't been on the ball field recently. He's been working."

"He couldn't earn much working for farmers," Donald argued.

"He has twenty dollars in the bank," Mr. Strong said. "Twenty dollars for his summer, Don—and how much for yours?"

Donald sank low in his chair. Twenty dollars! He had always felt a bit superior to Alex—and now Alex had twenty whole dollars and he had nothing. Oh, if he only could have the summer again! Why hadn't somebody told him to get out and hustle?

"Now, that you know the conditions," his father said, "if you do not care to go——"

"Oh, I'll go," said Donald.

Turning, he entered the house and went upstairs. His hand was on the doorknob of his room when a voice halted him.

"Don!"

It was Barbara. She came along the landing and put a hand on his shoulder.

"You'll study, won't you?" she pleaded.

"At me again, aren't you?" he asked.

"You make me so angry," she stormed, breathlessly. "I've been begging father to send you to high school and——"

"*You've* been begging father to send me?" he gasped.

"Of course, I have. You're the only boy. Oh, Don, I want to see you make something of yourself."

"I'm going to," he mumbled. He could think of nothing else to say.

"If you only would," cried Barbara. Suddenly she stopped and kissed him on the cheek, turned and fled down the hall.

Donald went into his room. He had thought that Alex Davidson's twenty dollars was the greatest surprise that could come to him. But here was a greater—Barbara pleading for him, Barbara ambitious for him to be somebody. Think of that! And he had told her that he was going to. He drew a deep breath. Well, he meant it.

CHAPTER II

DONALD'S GOOD TURN

NEXT morning, to the wonder of the family, Donald was downstairs long before breakfast was ready.

"Couldn't you sleep, Don?" Beth teased.

"Let Don alone," said Barbara.

It was curiosity that had brought Donald from bed so early. He had never seen a boy who owned twenty dollars. He had heard of boys who had one dollar, and once he had heard a rumor that Ted Carter had three dollars. But twenty dollars—— Donald held his breath. He wanted to see just how Alex Davidson looked now that he was so rich.

After breakfast he walked off. Barbara was disappointed. She had hoped that he would sweep his father's shop.

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But Donald's thoughts were not about sweeping. Twenty dollars! Didn't it beat everything, how lucky some fellows were? He was beginning to resent the fact that Alex had so much money. He felt as though Fortune had played him a shabby trick.

When he came to the Davidson cottage he loitered outside the fence. The garden was fragrant with late summer flowers. He thought it was a shame there were so few flowers in his yard. Barbara and Beth could easily find time to fuss with a little garden. He reached through the fence and plucked a poppy blossom. He heard footsteps coming down the path. He looked up. The poppy fell from his hands.

"Hello, Don!" cried Alex.

Donald stared. Alex was clothed completely in khaki—shirt, coat, breeches and leggings. His jaunty felt hat was of olive drab. Somehow, he looked very smart and alert, very bright and eager, very much like a boy who

could put his mind to the business of saving twenty dollars.

Donald found his voice. "Gosh! A boy scout. When did you join those kids?"

"Three weeks ago," Alex answered. "Our troop has just been organized. They're not kids, Don."

"Oh, no!" Donald's laugh was mocking. He was sore about that twenty dollars. "I've seen pictures of them being watched by a man—just as though they were babies."

"That's the scoutmaster," said Alex.

"I'd call him a nurse," Donald retorted. "You couldn't get me to be a boy scout."

"Maybe you couldn't be a scout," Alex said, quietly.

Donald's eyes opened wide. "Couldn't be? Why not?"

"Do you know the history of the flag?" Alex asked. "Do you know how to tie a square knot or a reef knot, or a sheepshank, or a clove hitch, or a——"

"'Maybe you couldn't be a scout,' Alex said quietly."

"You don't know all that, either," Donald broke in.

"Oh, yes, I do," said Alex. "I had to know all that before they'd let me become a scout."

"I could learn it if I wanted to," Donald declared. He wasn't going to show how dumfounded he was. Alex walked on down the road. Donald turned toward the baseball grounds. As he strolled along he wondered if Alex really could tie all those knots.

However, by the time the noon whistle blew at the sash mill he had once more become a scoffer. Knots or no knots, it must be a kids' organization, else why did a man go along to watch them?

That afternoon he went to the ball grounds again. To his delight, Mr. Wall, the Latin teacher, was batting to an eager crowd of infielders. It was the first time in many months that the high school coach had appeared on

the green. Donald edged close to the plate. He liked to be near Mr. Wall.

"Hello, Don," the man called. He chopped the ball toward first base. "Will you be with us when school opens next week?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! I had my eye on you when you were pitching for the grammar school. Wait around. I want to look you over."

"Yes, sir," said Donald. He would have waited all night. Mr. Wall had been watching him! Wasn't that fine?

Afterwards, in a quiet corner of the green, he pitched to the man. Wasn't Mr. Wall the good fellow! He knew just how to help you out, and just how to steady your control, and just what to say to make you do your best. As Donald walked home, slapping his glove against his thigh, he was quite sure that he and Mr. Wall were going to get on famously.

School opened the following Monday.

DONALD'S GOOD TURN

Donald left home that morning full of eager interest. On the way he met Alex. Alex was not in khaki today, but on the left breast pocket of his coat was a metal badge. It was curved like a smiling lip, and on it were the words, "BE PREPARED."

When they came to the high school, Mr. Wall stood in the wide doorway.

"Good morning," Donald said brightly.

"Good morning," said Mr. Wall. He raised his right hand to his forehead as though in salute. Donald blinked. Was that for him? He glanced back. Alex's hand was raised just as Mr. Wall's had been.

Donald gave a low whistle. In the cloakroom he swung around.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"The scout salute," said Alex. "Mr. Wall is our scoutmaster."

"Oh!" Donald exclaimed in surprise. "I didn't know that."

"He is though," said Alex. For a moment

he surveyed his companion appraisingly. When they came out of the cloak-room he walked right up to Mr. Wall and said: "I think Don ought to be a scout, don't you?"

Donald gasped in confusion. This was rushing things. "I—I didn't say so," he stammered.

Alex grinned. "Well, you want to, don't you?"

"Y—yes," said Donald; "I guess so."

Mr. Wall said, "That's fine."

Ten minutes later Don sat in assembly and didn't hear a word that Mr. Radcliffe, the principal, said. He had jeered at the boy scouts as a bunch of kids, and now he was going to be one of them!

A week later he had passed his tenderfoot requirements. Then, one day, he stood stiffly at attention and took the oath:

"On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the scout law; to help other people at all

times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

The words thrilled him. What a lot they meant. His head went higher.

"I'm glad you're with us, Don," said Mr. Wall.

"I'm glad, too," said Donald.

He had become a member of Chester Troop, Wolf Patrol. For the present, the troop met at Mr. Wall's library. And when Donald left he was wearing the tenderfoot badge pinned proudly to the lapel of his coat.

Reaching home, he sat on the porch and told Barbara all about the ceremony, and about that wonderful scout oath, and about Mr. Wall, and about the twelve scout laws.

"And what did you say the third law was?" Barbara asked.

"A scout is helpful," Donald answered. "It means—— Oh, you know; it means that a scout must do a good turn every day."

"Oh!" said Barbara. "Every day?"

"Every day," said Donald. He sat, thinking, for a while, and then went indoors.

Barbara waited for him to come out. When he failed to reappear, she followed him in. Beth met her in the hall.

"S-sh!" Beth whispered. "He's downstairs sweeping father's shop."

Barbara went back to the kitchen. After a while, when the boy had carried out the last of the shavings, she called from the kitchen doorway:

"Don! Have some lemonade?"

"You bet!" he said. "I was wishing for lemonade."

Next day he swept the shop again. He heard his father whistling at his bench. He could not remember when he had heard his father whistle before. And that night, at supper, there was a book lying alongside his plate.

"I thought you might like to have it, Don," said his father.

He read the title slowly: "Boy Scouts of America, Handbook for Boys."

Opening the book, he rapidly turned the pages, talking excitedly:

"Gee, here's animals—and animal tracks—and birds and birdhouses—and snakes—and fish—and bugs—and trees—and scout stunts—and scout badges—and campfires—and poison ivy—and swimming dope—and life-saving—and signal codes—and wireless outfits—and log cabins to make—and games to play—and——"

"And," his mother interrupted, smiling, "here's your supper to eat."

He had forgotten all about his supper.

Sunday, after church, Mr. Strong started off for the little walk he always took before Sunday's dinner. Donald had never been much interested in these walks. But lately—

"Can I go, dad?" he asked.

"Go where?"

"With you."

"You surely can, Don."

So they swung off side by side. His father began to tell him about the trees and the birds, and how the trees grew and how the birds lived. He had never realized that his father knew so much.

And after a while Donald began to talk about the hikes boy scouts took, and about the other Wolves.

"Wolves?" said his father.

"Yes, sir; ours is the Wolf Patrol."

Alex, he said, was a second-class scout, and soon he wanted to be a second-class scout, too.

"But I must wait thirty days," he said.

"Is that all?" his father asked. "Is that the only requirement?"

"Oh, no. I must be able to use a knife or a hatchet—"

"I can teach you that, Don."

"Oh! Will you, dad? And I must know about signaling, and first aid to the injured,

and I must have some money in the bank that I have earned, and—"

"How much money?" his father asked.

"One dollar."

"We can fix that," said his father. He held out his hand. "Here's your dollar, Don."

"Thank you," cried the boy. He reached eagerly for the money, paused, reached again, and finally pulled his hand away.

"I—I can't take it," he said.

"Why not?"

"I must earn my dollar."

"But you have earned it. This is for sweeping the shop."

"That—that was my good turn, dad. A scout won't take money for doing a good turn. A dollar's a lot of money, but—" The boy threw back his head. "I'll find a way to earn it somehow."

CHAPTER III

DONALD MAKES HIS CHOICE

THAT night Donald sat in his room and gave serious thought as to how he could earn money. Twist the problem as he would, there did not seem to be anything that he could do for which anybody would pay him. But next day, as he walked home from school, he noticed a lawn that looked sad and neglected.

"Gosh!" he said suddenly. "Maybe here's where I can get a job."

He ran up the gravel walk and rang the house bell. A woman opened the door.

"May I mow the lawn?" Donald asked.

"Ten cents is all I'll pay," said the woman.

Donald accepted the price. Ten cents, he

thought, was ten cents, and meant a start toward his dollar. He hurried home, dropped his books in his room, and started back for his first grapple with a real job.

"Hello!" cried a voice from the road. "What's your hurry?"

Donald looked back. Ted Carter was strolling along at a lazy pace.

"I have some work to do," Donald called. He took two or three quick steps and looked back as though expecting the other boy to follow.

"Oh, take your time," said Ted. "No need to break your neck."

Donald was in a fever of impatience to get his ten cents earned. Yet, for all that, he hesitated, and ended by waiting. In fact, most of the high school boys did about as Ted wished, for he was the oldest, and the biggest, and the strongest of them all.

"I have a job to mow a lawn," Donald explained, hoping Ted would walk faster.

Ted's stride remained unhurried.

"Catch me mowing lawns," he said. "How much are you getting?"

"Ten cents."

Ted whistled. "You must want ten cents bad."

"I do," Donald admitted. He started to tell about the requirement that he must earn and save a dollar; but Ted gave an amused chuckle, and Donald flushed and became silent. He didn't like to be laughed at. Somehow, Ted made him ashamed of his job. His enthusiasm began to cool.

"If I wanted a dollar," Ted said, "I'd go to my father and get it."

"My father wanted to give me a dollar," Donald retorted.

"And you wouldn't take it?" Ted demanded. "Oh, you knuckle-head."

Donald squirmed. He felt that it would do no good to explain again that the dollar had to be earned. He hoped that the other

boy would go away. But Ted strolled along at his side, and when they reached the house with the sad, neglected plot of grass, Ted leaned idly against a tree.

"You surely picked out a fine big job for your ten cents' worth," he observed.

Donald surveyed the lawn ruefully. It did seem awfully big. He hadn't noticed that fact when he had made his bargain, but now Ted's scoffing had robbed him of his zest.

He found a lawn mower behind the house by the kitchen door.

"Mind you, rake it clean," the woman called after him.

The afternoon had turned hot and sultry. Ted lounged in the shade of the tree and grinned. Donald pushed the mower until it seemed that he must have cut all the grass in the village of Chester. The sweat ran down his face, and his neck, and his back, and his chest.

"Half through," Ted called. "Five cents earned."

Donald sat on the grass. Only half through! He mopped his face.

"Ah! cut it out," said Ted. "Finish it tomorrow."

"I want to get through with it," Donald argued weakly. Why wouldn't Ted let him alone?

"Ah!" cried Ted; "come on down to the station and I'll buy you a soda."

Donald's good resolutions weakened. He was hot and thirsty. A long, cool soda, with ice cream floating on the top—

"Wait until I rake this," he said.

The soda was good. It trickled down his throat and seemed to soak into him joyously.

"Have another," said Ted. "I don't have to cut lawns to get a dollar."

Donald had another.

But that evening, as he swept his father's shop, he was terribly dissatisfied with himself

and his prospects. Tomorrow he had the other half of the lawn to do. If he had stuck it out the job would now be off his hands. Despite those two sodas he began to feel that he had been cheated out of something, and that Ted had something to do with it.

Next day, after leaving school, he went directly to the lawn. He hoped that in this way he would escape Ted's attentions. His plan succeeded, for he was raking away the last of the cut grass when Ted appeared.

"Didn't go home, did you?" he asked.

"No," said Donald.

"I whistled outside your house," Ted explained. "Barbara came out and said you weren't home. I guess Barbara doesn't like me."

Donald wheeled the mower around to the rear of the house and collected his ten cents. For a while he stared at the money in a sort of fascination. He had earned it; he had

sweated and worked for it. Gee, it was the biggest ten cents in the world.

"Come on up to the field and play ball," Ted invited. "It's a dandy day for a ball game."

Donald declined. He had earned a part of his dollar. He wanted to go home and tell Barbara all about it.

And Barbara, when he had finished his story, went upstairs and came down with a yellow bank shaped like an orange. Into this Donald dropped his money.

"Ted Carter says you don't like him," he remarked suddenly.

"Does he?" Barbara asked. At supper she observed that a lazy boy usually tries to make other boys lazy.

"Now what put that into your head?" asked Mrs. Strong.

Donald looked at his sister. He wondered if she meant Ted.

He had a mind, next afternoon, to look for

other lawns to conquer. But Mr. Wall kept him after school.

"Don," said the teacher, "I'm speaking now as the Scoutmaster of Chester Troop. How much were you paid for cutting that grass?"

"Ten cents," said Donald. He was not surprised that Mr. Wall knew of his work, for Ted had gleefully told the story all over school. "I'm saving my dollar," he added.

"Ten cents wasn't enough," said Mr. Wall. "We expect our scouts to be thrifty and clean, but we also expect them to have dignity. We don't want people to say that a scout will do anything for a nickel. We want them to say that a scout stands for an honest job and an honest price. If a fellow accepts a cheap price people will think he's a cheap boy. I don't mean by that that a scout must squeeze hard for all he can get. If he takes more than he's entitled to he isn't square. How much do you think you're worth?"

"Not much, I guess," said Donald, grinning.

"Well, let's see. Cutting grass in the heat of the day is hard work, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Now we'll talk about price. Do you think you're worth ten cents an hour?"

Here is a problem that was new to Donald. "Am I?" he asked helplessly.

"I think you are," Mr. Wall told him, "if you work faithfully. That doesn't mean that a scout can take a job at ten cents an hour and then soldier so that the job will last a long time. A scout who did that wouldn't be trustworthy."

"He'd be cheating," said Donald.

"He'd be lying, too," said the Scoutmaster. "He'd be promising to do ten cents' worth of work each hour and perhaps doing only about six cents' worth. Do you see what I mean, Don?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Ten cents an hour is your price. And make each hour an honest hour."

"I will," Donald promised. He felt that Mr. Wall had put him on his honor. He threw back his shoulders with a sense of his responsibility.

From this moment ten cents an hour would be his price. If nobody wanted to hire him for ten cents——. He drew a deep breath. Well, he'd cross that bridge when he came to it.

During the next three days Don Strong was a busy boy. His zest had returned and he quickly found work. To his surprise, his price of ten cents an hour met with no objection. Thursday he earned twenty cents mowing a lawn, and Friday he found a job working the weeds out of a bed of poppies. That night he dropped fifteen cents into the orange bank. He now had forty-five cents saved. He felt like a capitalist.

Saturday morning he worked with his

books. But right after dinner he attacked the carpenter shop. He was beginning to take pride in his sweeping, and did it thoroughly.

That afternoon his father showed him how to use a hatchet and a knife. He had an appointment to meet Ted Carter at the village field, but the lesson was so interesting that he forgot all about it. When he ran inside just before supper to put the hatchet away, he saw that Barbara had cleaned the shop windows.

"Dad will like that," he thought aloud. "I guess Barbara would make a good scout."

The following Monday the high school team started football practice. After school Donald hurried to the village field. Alex Davidson was not out, nor was Ted Carter. This surprised him. However, he had little time to think about other boys. Mr. Wall soon had him passing the ball, and falling on it, and running down the field under

kicks. Donald was sure that he showed up pretty well.

After the practice he saw Ted lounging near one of the goal posts, looking on with a weary air.

"Aren't you out for the team?" Don asked. He thought that a big fellow like Ted would make a corking good guard or tackle.

"Nix!" Ted grinned. "Too much like hard work."

"Work?" Donald laughed. "Why, it's fun. You ought to come out, Ted."

Ted yawned. "That's what Mr. Wall has been telling me for two years. I'll sit back and watch you fellows. Come on down and have a soda."

Donald went with him to the confectionery shop near the railroad station.

"You won't think it much fun," Ted confided, "when you find yourself in the scrub, maybe."

Donald smiled. He hadn't given the scrub

a thought. He was going to play on the school team.

But before a week was out he began to worry. A boy named Cordts was sure to play left end. In fact, Cordts had played there for two years. That left only right end—and he found that Andy Ford was fighting for that.

Andy was blue-eyed, and red-haired, and freckle-faced. He seemed to be always smiling. But, for all that smile, he tore up and down the field like a tornado. Boys that he tackled grumbled that he could be a trifle gentler seeing that it was only practice.

"Don't pay any attention to Andy," Ted advised. "He's running wild. He's going to blow up in a hurry. Come down and have a soda."

Donald didn't like to be always drinking sodas at Ted's expense. However, it was sweet to have somebody tell him he'd make the team, so he went along.

"You don't catch me stewing around about football," Ted chuckled.

The next Monday the rough and tumble of practice started again. For the first time Mr. Wall assembled an eleven. Cordts was at one end of the line, and Andy Ford at the other. All afternoon it ran through signals. Donald didn't get a chance to do any playing at all.

Discouraged and downcast, he trudged away from the field. Ted Carter ran after him.

"I don't blame you for feeling sore," he said. "You ought to be out there instead of Andy. Ah, let's forget it. Come on down and have a soda."

Donald swallowed the lump in his throat. "Let me buy these sodas," he said. "I want to go home first."

Ted waited in the road. Donald ran in and took the orange bank down from its place. The money clinked loudly as he tried to slide out a coin. A ten-cent piece quickly dropped

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into his hand, and he put back the bank and hurried out.

Ted, after drinking his first soda, insisted on buying the second.

"You ought to be on that team," he said. "It's a shame."

Donald thought so, too. After he left Ted his gloominess deepened. The ten cents he had spent began to trouble him. Now there was only thirty-five cents in the bank. Everything seemed to be going wrong. When he reached home he did not go near the cellar, and for the first time in weeks it remained unswept.

Next day he got something to do at practice; but, to his chagrin, that something was practicing with a scrub. He did his work listlessly, and twice Mr. Wall spoke to him sharply. After the work was over he found Ted waiting.

"Rotten!" said Ted; "that's what I call it. Come on down and——"

"Not today," said Donald. He was too miserable to think of soda. And that afternoon, for the second time, the carpenter shop remained unswept.

The following afternoon the squad had its first scrimmage. Donald found himself playing against Andy Ford. Here was where he would show who was master! But on the first play—the school team had the ball—he found that Andy had him blocked off completely. One of the backs went around him for a big gain.

"You're standing flat-footed," Andy whispered. "Get up on your toes more."

Donald said nothing. He felt cheap at the failure he had made of his first play.

For a while he did fairly well. Then came another charge. The runner was well protected. He became bewildered trying to figure out where to strike. Then the play went over him. He picked himself from the ground. Andy's voice sounded in his ear:

"Never mind how many interferers there are. Keep your eyes on the ball. You tried to watch all the interference. Watch the ball."

Donald felt blue. This was a different type of game than he had ever played. Here was football with brains, and training, and science behind it. He was used to the rough-and-ready, take-a-chance, hit-or-miss type of play.

Ted wasn't at the field today. Donald was glad that his friend hadn't seen the practice.

He went straight home and up to his room. Barbara was in the kitchen, but she did not call to him with her old hearty air of good-fellowship.

Donald sat on the bed. Soon would come the summons to supper. Barbara would look at him——

"Ah!" Donald scowled, "she's mad at me because I haven't swept the shop."

But, after a moment, he had a vague feeling that he was wrong. Barbara wasn't an-

gry at him for just that. There was something else. He had seen it in her eyes—something—something— Oh, he didn't know what it was.

He was still puzzling his brain when he went downstairs and took his place at table. He was resolved that he wouldn't look at his sister. However, when the meal was over, he met her in the hall. Their eyes met. Donald stood still and let her walk past him.

He knew now. Her eyes had said, "Don! Don! How about your good turn?"

He had forgotten it from that angle. He thought he was simply stopping something because he was sore and discouraged, but he had promised on his honor to obey the scout laws, and he was quitting. He wasn't doing his good turn a day.

He swung around and went down to the shop. It was dark. He found a lamp and lit it. Barbara was singing in the kitchen. As his broom started to swish the singing

stopped. Then suddenly it went on again, gayer and more light-hearted than it had been before.

When he came up from the cellar he felt better. He was once more a scout in good standing. He had squared accounts with his oath.

Two days later the entire football squad went off for the first game on the schedule. Hillside Academy was expected to prove easy prey. The Chester boys, as a whole, wondered how high the score would be. Donald wondered if he would get in the game.

"It will be a shame if you don't," Ted stormed. "I wouldn't stand for it."

"I'd like to get a chance," Donald said.

However, all through the afternoon he stood far back from the sideline and waited for the chance that did not come. Andy Ford played from the kick-off to the final whistle. Donald turned away with an air of hopelessness.

"I call that raw," cried Ted. "Bring you out afternoons, and bang you around as much as they like, and then ignore you when a real game comes. I'd tell them to go fish."

"I—I'm going to quit," Donald faltered. If they had given him only five minutes! "You're the only fellow who stands by me," he said gratefully.

So Donald dropped quietly from the squad. Instead of waiting when the next practice came, he put his books under his arm and went home. He had an idea that Mr. Wall would question him; but a day or two passed and the Latin teacher seemed to be unaware that he had abandoned the scrub.

Donald became irritated when he found that his presence or absence apparently meant so little. From a safe distance he watched the work of the new boy playing against Andy.

"That fellow's a shine," he told himself. "He doesn't even know the rules."

Saturday the eleven played its second contest. It was an "at home" game, but Donald, sulking, did not go to the village field to cheer on his school. Ted Carter brought him news of the result.

"We won," he announced. "Say, you ought to get a chance now. They fooled Andy on a forward pass and tangled him up on a fake kick."

"Did they score?" Donald asked.

"No—no; they didn't. But if Andy hadn't recovered himself and gotten into those two plays, they would have scored surely. Will you go back if they ask you?"

Donald tried to look stern. "I should say not."

"That's right," Ted agreed. "There's nothing like having backbone. If a fellow quits he ought to stay quit."

It pleased Donald to have Ted praise his spunk. There was a troop meeting that night, and he had intended to stay away. He felt

awkward about facing Mr. Wall. But after what Ted had said about his backbone he just had to go.

All day a storm had threatened. Rain began to fall just as he reached Mr. Wall's house. Alex Davidson was there, and so was Phil Morris, leader of the Wolf Patrol. The boys sat in the library and stared at the rows of books while Mr. Wall corrected class papers at a distant desk. Presently the Scoutmaster looked at his watch.

"Half-past eight," he said. "The rain has kept away the others. There's no use in only us four holding a meeting."

The boys stood up.

"You needn't run away," Mr. Wall laughed. He drew a chair alongside Donald. "Let's have a chat. Sit down."

Donald scarcely breathed. Was Mr. Wall going to ask him about football? But the Scoutmaster began to tell them about first aid and bandaging.

"What scout law does this work come under?" he asked.

"Third," said Phil Morris promptly. "A scout is helpful."

"Yes," said Mr. Wall thoughtfully; "a scout is helpful—if he is the right kind of scout. Whether he likes what he's given to do or whether he dislikes the task, he digs in. He doesn't drop his burden and stalk off just because he doesn't like the way things are going. If he's there to help, he helps."

Alex nodded as though that was his idea, too. Donald stole a glance at Mr. Wall and then looked away.

"It's easy to be helpful," the Scoutmaster continued, "when it gives us pleasure to do our task, or when we hold the center of the stage with everybody looking on. However, we can't all have the fun, and we can't all be out in the sunshine. Every time a baseball game is played some boys must sit on the bench. Every time a race is run some boys

must stand aside and hold the blankets of the runners. Every time a battle is fought some soldiers must remain in the rear and guard supplies. But they all help—those who sit on the bench, those who hold the blankets, those who guard the rear.

"And a scout is on his honor to help at all times. He stands for things that are fine, and clean, and true. He doesn't knock and he doesn't sulk. When he's given something to do he stays with his job. He——" Mr. Wall looked around at the boys and smiled slowly. "I'm preaching again," he said.

"Every time you tell us about the scout laws," Phil Morris said in a low voice, "I think of something I should have done."

"That," the Scoutmaster said, gently, "is what the laws are for—to bring us back when we stray off." His tones became pleasantly brisk. "Have you demanded your ten cents an hour, Don?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy. He lapsed into

silence. He wasn't thinking about ten cents an hour just then. And later, when he departed with Alex and Phil, he walked home thoughtfully, his hands dug deep into his pockets.

Monday, after school, he went down to the lockers in the basement of the building, and put on his football suit. Almost shamefaced he walked alone to the village field. Members of the squad stared at him. Andy Ford pinched his arm.

"That's better, Don," he whispered.

Somehow, he had the feeling that Mr. Wall had been watching to see if he would come. But the coach gave him not a word. For fifteen minutes he waited around with nothing to do. Then, when school team and scrub lined up for a scrimmage, he heard his name read off the list just as though he had never been absent. He scampered out to his old place. The scrub tackle nudged him in the ribs.

"What happened to you? Ted said you had quit."

Donald pretended not to hear. The tackle laughed.

"Don't want to talk about it, do you? Well, I'm glad you're back. That other fellow couldn't give Andy any practice."

The kick-off almost caught Donald asleep. He was thinking. He saw now what helping meant. Playing on the scrub didn't mean that you were useless. It meant that you were fitting the school team for its real games. Why, at that rate, he was Andy Ford's trainer.

With that thought he plunged into the game. He didn't do anything startling, but he did manage to keep Andy on the jump. Once the play swung over toward the side line. He heard Ted Carter's voice:

"Well, you are one fine skate."

Donald's cheeks reddened. He did not look toward the fringe of spectators.

After the practice he found his friend waiting.

"Mr. Weak-knees!" Ted jeered. "I thought you said you were through."

"I was," Donald answered.

"Sure," Ted agreed. "This looks like it, doesn't it?" His eyes ran up and down the dirty uniform. "I'll bet you knew all along you were going back."

"I didn't," cried Don indignantly. "When I quit that time I hadn't stopped to think. A fellow on the scrub is doing his part. He's helping the team. Without the scrub the team couldn't find its stride."

Ted looked at him curiously. "Where did you get that dope?"

"From the scout laws. A scout must be——"

"Yah!" Ted howled in derision. "That's how he hooked you, was it? Go out there now and have Andy make a monkey of you, and get all bruised and battered, and then

when a game comes find you're forgotten. Oh, you easy mark."

"Ah, Ted," Donald pleaded, "you don't understand."

"No?" The other boy laughed. "You couldn't get me to belong to a gang like that. Next thing you know they'll be feeding you with a spoon."

"But, Ted——"

"Yah! Run along home or the kidnapper will get you."

Donald longed to make Ted see the matter as he saw it. But Ted swung around and, with a careless, slouching swagger, strolled back toward the field.

Donald, staring after him, was genuinely sorry. Ted had been his friend. Ted had stood for him. He didn't want to lose Ted's good will. But as between standing with Ted Carter or standing with Mr. Wall——

"Gee," he muttered to himself, "I hope Ted won't be sore at me all season."

CHAPTER IV

THE NINTH LAW

SOON Donald found that playing on the scrub was going to allow him lots of time for other things. Now that Mr. Wall had the school team running nicely, he permitted only one practice scrimmage a week. As a result there were many days when Don lined up with the scrub, ran through signals for ten or fifteen minutes, and was then free.

In some way he had got over his liking for loafing. He wanted to be up and doing. Even the fact that Ted Carter became friendly again did not slow him up. He walked and talked with Ted, but all the time his mind was active with the thought of getting ahead and becoming a second-class scout.

He had learned quite a bit about elemen-

tary first aid and bandaging. He had mastered the scout pace. As soon as the football season closed he knew there would be many Saturday hikes, and he felt that he would soon get the knack of starting his own fire and of cooking his rations. He was going to ask Barbara to check him up on the observation test of looking for one minute at a store window. And he was going to earn his dollar.

For the present, however, earning a dollar was his greatest problem. Checked by the cool nights the grass no longer grew luxuriantly. His business of mowing lawns was at an end. He had to find something else to do.

For a week he was in a blind alley that led nowheres. He walked all around town but saw nothing that gave promise of a job. Sometimes Ted walked with him, and sometimes he walked alone.

"Gee!" Ted complained. "You could be sitting down taking things easy."

"Not now," he smiled. Ted wanted to know why, but he did not explain.

Then came the first frost. As though by magic the trees began to go bare. Donald, coming down to breakfast a few mornings later, found Barbara raking the dead leaves from the lawn.

"Here," he called. "Let me do that."

Barbara laughed. "It's fun, Don; I like it. Go in to breakfast."

But Donald took the rake from her hands. "I want practice," he said. "Here's the job I've been looking for." He knew now how he was going to earn his dollar.

That afternoon there was a scrimmage between the school team and the scrub. Donald's heart was set on finding lawns to rake. However, he pushed these thoughts aside and played the best football that was in him. Andy Ford gave him a grin.

"You're speeding up, Don," he said.

Donald mumbled that he knew it. He had

not yet entirely recovered from the fact that Andy had beaten him out. On his way home, after the practice, he discovered a lawn thick with leaves and engaged to rake it on the morrow.

Next afternoon Ted sat back and watched him while he worked. But now Donald was used to this and he did not mind. He raked steadily, and at length the lawn was clean. His labor earned him twenty cents.

When he reached home he found Beth flushed and happy. Starting with Monday she was going to work steadily at the bake shop for three dollars a week.

"This is going to be a rich family," Barbara laughed. "Beth's got a steady job, and Don is saving."

That night, at Mr. Wall's library, the Scoutmaster suggested something that had never entered Don's head before. It was building bird houses. The spring was still months away, but there was much to be de-

cided—what sort of birds to build houses for, what kind of houses to build.

Donald listened with great interest. The idea of building a house that a bird would live in fired his imagination.

One by one the scouts decided what type of house each would construct.

"How about you, Don?" Mr. Wall asked.

Donald hesitated. "I—I guess I'd like to build a house for a robin. Could I?"

The Scoutmaster smiled. "Nothing easier," he said, and the boy was pleased. He had feared, for a moment, that perhaps robins wouldn't live in a house that somebody built for them.

Before the meeting adjourned Mr. Wall gave him a leaflet that told about bird houses. Donald could scarcely wait to get home to read it. Once in his room he lighted the lamp and began to study hungrily. Before he went to bed he had learned that a house for a robin should be eight inches from roof to

floor, and that the floor should be six by eight inches, and that one or more sides should be left open, and that the house should be hung from six to fifteen feet above the ground.

"My me!" he exclaimed as he undressed. "I'll bet I can build a nifty house."

Next day, after church, he worked on his plan. When it was finished, it did not suit him. He had made the mistake of trying to be fancy.

"No bird would live in that," he reflected ruefully.

After dinner he tried again. This time he was better pleased. He took the sketch to his father.

The house he had planned this time was very plain. It was open at two ends, and its slanting roof had enough overhang to shield the floor from the weather.

"You see, dad," he explained, "barn swallows and robins use almost the same size

house. I changed the dimensions a little. Maybe if I don't get a family of robins I'll get a family of swallows."

His father examined the plan. "I'll lay out some wood for you," he said. "You can start to build any time you're ready."

"Oh!" cried Donald. "Is it really good enough?"

"Plenty," said Mr. Strong.

After that Don became the busiest boy in Chester. What with his studies, and his football practice, and his troop meetings, and his bird house, he had plenty to do. In between times he looked for jobs raking lawns. That week he earned a quarter. Saturday the school team played at home and was defeated. Donald saw the game, but declined Ted Carter's invitation to have a soda. If Ted bought him a soda, he thought that he ought to buy a soda, too, and every time he bought soda that meant that he was ten cents further away from his dollar. There was now seventy-five cents

in the bank, and he wanted to hold on to every cent of it.

By the time the troop met again, Donald's bird house was finished. He had sandpapered all the joints, and had puttied the holes left by nails, and had stained the whole a neutral shade of green.

While building it he had felt the joy of the creator. But now that it was finished, he thought that it looked cheap. Nevertheless, when he set out for the meeting-place, he stuck the bird house under his arm. Good or bad, it represented the best house that he could build, and he wasn't going to be ashamed of it.

An hour later he was glad that he had brought it, for Mr. Wall had praised it for what he called "its honest simplicity." What was better still, the Scoutmaster had advised that he use the house as a model and go around and solicit orders.

"But," Donald asked, "do you think any-

body will buy them, and how much should I charge?"

Mr. Wall studied the model through half-shut eyes. "There's about twenty-five cents' worth of lumber there," he said. "Charge fifty cents."

Fifty cents? Donald could scarcely hide his joy. Why, he'd soon have his dollar now. Maybe he would be able to save three or four dollars and buy some nice Christmas presents for his father and his mother, and for Barbara and Beth.

The other scouts had all made the mistake that Donald had made in his first attempt. Their models were all too ambitious. They crowded around Don without envy and stared critically at his idea.

"We were thinking of frills and fancy things," Alex Davidson smiled, "and Don was thinking about something for a bird to live in."

After the meeting Don hurried home. He

told his father what Mr. Wall had said about selling bird houses.

"If you're going into business," his father said seriously, "you'll want to know what your product costs. I'll get my lumber bills."

So the bills were brought out. Side by side, like partners in a great enterprise, they figured cost.

"Twenty-one cents," Donald said at last, "to build that bird house."

"That's not counting paint and nails and putty," said his father. "Anyway, Don, you had better use screws. They will make a stronger job. Go down to the lumber yard tomorrow and order your supplies."

"But I have only fifty cents," said Donald.

"Charge them," his father smiled. "All business men buy on credit. When your bill comes due, pay it. You'll have to keep books now."

"Yes, sir," said the boy. He went up to bed feeling very important. In a drawer of his

bureau he found an old pocket note book. On the cover he wrote:

DONALD STRONG

BIRD HOUSES

"Gee!" he grinned. "I wonder what Ted Carter will say?"

And what Ted did was to laugh and poke fun. But under it all Donald could see that his friend was just a little bit impressed.

Monday morning the boy quit the business of raking lawns. After school he trudged from door to door showing his sample and soliciting orders. Late in the afternoon a woman told him he might make her one. Before he got home he secured another order.

Next morning, on his way to school, he stopped at the lumber yard and ordered some three-quarter-inch lumber, a quart can of prepared stain, and screws and putty. When he came home to dinner the material was in his father's shop and a very important-looking

bill awaited him. He went down to the shop and checked off the stuff just as he had seen his father do.

"All there," he said. He took the bill up to his room and entered it in his book. He saw a line on the bill that told him it was payable in thirty days. At that he had a momentary fright. He had orders for only two. He'd never be able to pay that bill if he didn't sell more bird houses.

In the evening he wanted to start right in on his first house, but Ted Carter whistled outside his gate and he walked down to the fence.

"Any orders?" Ted asked.

"Two," said Donald.

"Get all you can," Ted said. "There's a show coming. I saw the signs in a store window. It's twenty-five cents admission. If you sell a whole lot of bird houses you can go, can't you?"

"You bet!" cried Donald. Theatrical com-

panies seldom came to Chester. "When's the show?" he asked suddenly.

"Wednesday of next week," Ted told him.

Donald breathed easier. That gave him lots of time. He'd surely have his dollar and some over, so much over, in fact, that he could easily spend a quarter and not miss it.

"You won't be able to do anything tomorrow," Ted reminded him. "Football scrimmage."

"I'll dig in Thursday," Donald said confidently.

But on Thursday afternoon he was back on the football field. Wednesday he had played with more strength and dash than he had ever shown before. After the practice Mr. Wall had asked him to wait. There had been a short conference between the coach and Leonard, the captain.

"Don," Mr. Wall had said, "we're getting to the tough part of the schedule. In a hot game an end gets used up pretty quickly. We

need a good substitute, and I guess you'll fill the bill. Leonard will give you the school team signals. You'll have to practice every afternoon now."

"Yes, sir," said Donald.

Five minutes later he was scurrying home with a typewritten copy of the signals in his pocket. That night he studied them zealously. For the moment the bird houses were forgotten. He was going to get a chance on the eleven!

Next afternoon a new boy had his place on the scrub. He walked up and down the sideline and followed the play. Toward the close of the day he went into the school line-up for the first time. Andy Ford gave him a grin.

"Wonder if he's laughing at me?" Donald thought. A moment later he was up to his neck in work trying to master the signals so quickly that he would not slow up the plays that came his way.

After the practice he found Ted waiting.

"Swell chance you have of seeing the show if you're going to play football every afternoon," Ted complained. "How are you going to build bird houses?"

"I—I'll find a way," Donald said uneasily. All at once the matter began to trouble him. When Mr. Wall had told him to report for daily practice he had been delighted. Now, however, the thought came to him that he might be in a mess. He couldn't split himself in half. He couldn't be on the football field and in the shop at the same time. If he gave his afternoons to football, he would have to drop bird houses.

Something told him that it was his duty to stand by the team if the team needed him. On the other hand, there was his bill at the lumber yard. It had to be paid within thirty days. He knew that he would not be able to pay it if he did not do some work and collect some money.

And now a new thought came to him about that lumber bill. When he reached home he went up to his room, took the bill from a bureau drawer and read it slowly. He came to the part he sought:

> "Interest at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum will be charged on all accounts not paid within thirty days."

Don felt a sudden panic. At school whenever they gave him a problem in interest, the answer always ran large in dollars. Everybody who paid interest, it seemed, paid a lot of money. And he didn't have a lot of money to pay.

"I guess," he said, "I've bitten off more than I can chew."

He went down to supper with the conviction that something had to be done about his bill for the bird-house lumber. He got through his football practice too late. If he could get through earlier——

"What's the matter, Don?" Barbara whis-

pered. "You're sitting with your mouth wide open."

"I thought of something," Donald answered.

Why couldn't he practice first instead of 'Andy Ford? Then, as soon as his turn ended he could hurry home and start work. That night he went around to see Mr. Wall. The coach heard his story and looked at the lumber company bill, then glanced at him and smiled a bit.

"Afraid of having a bill you cannot pay, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Donald. "Could I practice first?"

"Yes; we can fix that. And, Don, always be afraid of the bill you cannot pay."

"Yes, sir," said the boy. He didn't quite grasp the full meaning of this, but he was acutely aware that a great load had been lifted from his mind. Next day he would start in earnest.

But when he hurried home from the practice next afternoon it seemed that he could not get started the way he wanted to. When supper time came he had accomplished very little.

"Tomorrow's Saturday," he told himself. "No school. I'll get up early and work all morning."

He was in the shop at eight o'clock. By noon the first bird house was finished. He went upstairs jubilant.

"Football today?" Barbara asked.

Donald nodded. It was a road game. The team had to travel to a neighboring town. Suddenly his face lengthened. The round trip was twenty cents. The other high school would pay half their fare, but at that the trip would cost him ten cents. That would leave him only sixty-five cents in the bank.

"Gee," he muttered, "football's getting me in trouble every way."

However, when he stepped aboard the lo-

cal trolley with his uniform in a battered suitcase, he felt better. He was one of the squad. He could sit with Leonard and Mr. Wall and feel that he was not intruding. That was worth ten cents alone. Now, if he got into the game——

He got in at the finish for ten glorious minutes. Twice the other school tried him, and twice he spilled the play. He rode home feeling that he was a hero. His pulse still pounded from the joy of the game. This was worth all the ten-cent pieces in his possession.

That night he delivered the bird house and collected fifty cents. The coin fell into the orange bank with a cheerful clink. His fortune had reached a high-water mark of one dollar and fifteen cents.

Sunday he did no work in the shop. Monday there was football practice. Donald had his turn first and should have hurried away. But the glamour of having played Saturday was over him. He lingered and lingered and

lingered, and when at last he did hurry off it was too late to get much done.

"How about that other bird house?" Ted asked. "Will you be able to go to the show?"

"Sure," said Donald. He wasn't going to worry about that other bird house. Didn't he have over a dollar in the bank?

"How much does it cost to build one?" Ted inquired.

"Why——" Donald paused, stared ahead a moment and swallowed as though his throat were dry. "About a quarter," he said weakly. "See you tomorrow, Ted."

He wanted to be alone. He had blundered again. He had one dollar and fifteen cents in the bank, but only ninety cents of it was his. Twenty-five cents was due the lumber company for the material that had gone into the first bird house.

Why hadn't he hurried home and started the second house? If he didn't finish it in

time to deliver it tomorrow night, it—he swallowed again—it would be impossible for him to go to the show. And he wanted to go. It might be months before another show came to Chester.

"I'll work tonight," he vowed. "I'll pile in and get that other bird house done."

After supper he lighted a lamp and carried it down to the shop. The illumination was poor. The board on which he worked was half in and half out of shadow. Yet, for all that, the boy labored with furious haste. When bed time came he had his material cut. Next afternoon he would put it together, deliver and collect his price. He'd see that show after all.

The better to make sure of the completion of his job, he asked to be excused from the next day's practice. As soon as classes were over he hurried home. He sat near his father's bench and began to put the house together.

Gradually, as he worked, he began to see that this house wasn't going to have the trim look of the sample. The edges were ragged. One of the corners wabbled. It was a sloppy job.

From the gate came Ted Carter's whistle. Donald went out.

"We want to get our tickets before school tomorrow," Ted said excitedly. "The best seats are always sold before night. Going, aren't you?"

"S—sure," said Donald.

"Finish the bird house?"

"Finishing it now."

"I'll whistle for you in the morning," Ted told him. "We'll go right down and get good seats side by side. So long."

Donald went back to the shop. His father was looking at the bird house. Mr. Strong put down the job and quietly returned to his bench.

"It—it's a little loose," said Donald.

"A little," said his father.

The boy pondered. Perhaps, if he put the screws in very tight, he could get those edges together. Maybe, if there was only a little space, he could putty it and the paint would hide the effect. He went to work.

But, screw as tight as he might, he could not bring the edges snug. In the end he puttied the open spaces and stained the wood. He went upstairs. He did not look back, but he was sure that his father had gone over to inspect the job.

At that his cheeks flushed. He thought about what Mr. Wall had said about an honest job and an honest price.

"But," he faltered, "but I need the money. That's why I hurried." He knew, without being told, that his excuse sounded weak. When he came down to supper he didn't feel like eating.

"Going to deliver the bird house tonight?" his father asked.

He stared at his plate a moment.

"I—I'm not going to sell that house," he said.

He heard Barbara breathe as though she had been holding her breath. Then:

"May I have it, Don?" she asked.

"It isn't worth giving," the boy said in a low voice.

"Oh, yes, it is," said Barbara. "It's worth more to me than the best bird house in the world."

He looked at her. He knew now. She—she understood, and was glad.

Sitting on the porch after supper he heard Ted Carter's whistle at the front gate.

"I was just passing," Ted said hurriedly. "Finish the bird house?"

"Yes," said Donald.

"Good! I'll get you out in the morning. Everybody says it's going to be the finest show that ever came to Chester. One scene has a railroad wreck, and in another scene a fel-

low jumps off a bridge. We want to get good seats so we can see everything."

Ted was gone. Donald walked slowly back to the porch.

A railroad wreck and a fellow jumping off a bridge! Why hadn't he worked a little slower on that bird house?

Suddenly he clapped his hands together. If he worked every afternoon and took his time he could turn out bird houses that would be right. Why, he could easily make eight in the next three weeks. He had made the rejected house in a few hours, but he had spoiled things by hurrying. Well, if he went just a little slower, and made his eight, he'd have all kinds of money. He'd have enough to pay his lumber bill, and the dollar to put in the bank to meet the second-class scout requirement, and enough to buy more material and pay cash if he wanted to. Think of it—cash!

He became all aglow with enthusiasm. Why, there was no reason why he couldn't

see the show. All he had to do was to make those eight houses, and he would have so much money that taking a quarter now wouldn't make the least bit of difference.

He opened his pen-knife, went inside and took down the bank. Soon a twenty-five cent piece fell into his hands. He would buy his ticket in the morning.

Upstairs in his own room later doubts began to dampen his joy. He had made two houses and there wasn't a penny of profit to show. He had made twenty-five cents on the first job, and had lost twenty-five cents on the second.

He tried to tell himself that the eight houses he was going to build would make all the difference in the world. And at once he found a new question presenting itself. Would he make eight houses? Would he tear himself away from the football practice the moment his turn ended?

He sat on the side of the bed and did not

undress. Suppose he couldn't make those eight houses? Suppose Andy Ford was hurt and he was the only player for the place? Then he'd have to practice all afternoon. Suppose he spoiled one or two of the eight houses. Suppose—— He stood up and walked over to the window. Suppose he couldn't pay his bill at the lumber yard. Just as Mr. Wall had said, it was the bill you couldn't pay that made you afraid.

On the bureau top was his Scout "Handbook for Boys." He opened it and turned to the Scout Laws and read them slowly. He came to this:

> A Scout is thrifty. He saves his money so that he may pay his own way.

Pay his own way meant what? It meant paying his bills. How could he be sure of being able to pay his bills if he didn't save his money?

Donald's breath trembled in a sigh. A train wreck and a fellow jumping off a bridge!

"I'll bet it's a fine show," he said wistfully.

The house had quieted. He opened his room door, tiptoed along the hall and started to go downstairs. Once or twice his feet caused the boards to creak. He stood still and listened, but nobody came to investigate. Presently he reached the parlor.

He heard his mother and Barbara talking quietly in the kitchen. In the darkness his hand felt along the mantel-piece. His fingers touched the orange bank, felt about until they came to the little slot, and opened. A piece of silver clinked as it dropped into the bank.

CHAPTER V

DONALD RECEIVES A GIFT

WHEN Don awoke next morning he lay in bed with no ambition to be up and doing. Before him stretched a sorry sort of day. Right at the start he would have to meet Ted and explain that he could not go to the show. He had faced Ted's gibes before, and he knew that explaining to his friend wasn't going to be a very cheerful experience.

At length the smell of coffee and griddle cakes told him that breakfast was almost ready. He arose and began to dress.

"Hurry, Don," came Barbara's voice. "I'm keeping your cakes hot."

He came downstairs scarcely interested as to whether his breakfast was hot or cold. He

had hardly seated himself at the table when a whistle sounded shrilly from the road.

Barbara looked at him.

"Is that Ted Carter?"

Donald nodded.

"So early?"

"We have an appointment," said the boy.

He ate a few cakes, and then excused himself and went out to the hall for his hat. He heard Barbara say something about people who had nothing to do but hang around.

Ted, at the gate, was stamping impatiently. He brightened as Donald approached.

"I thought you were never coming. Hurry! We want to get good seats."

But Donald, instead of coming out to join him, stood inside the fence and looked miserable. "I can't go," he blurted.

"What's that?" Ted swung around. "Why not?"

"I can't afford it. I owe money to the lumber yard, and I must save a dollar——"

"Beans!" Ted cried in disgust. "Boy scouts again."

"I'd have been all right if I hadn't mussed up that second bird house," Donald explained. "Instead of making a quarter, I lost a quarter. If I don't pay the lumber yard in thirty days they'll charge me interest."

Ted scowled. "You ought to have some money. You've been cutting grass, and raking lawns, and——"

"I have a dollar and fifteen cents."

"How much?"

"A dollar and fifteen cents."

"Is that all?" Ted mocked. His tone became sharp. "How much do you think a ticket costs, a million dollars?"

"I can't spend a quarter," said Donald. He began to explain again about his lumber bill, and the dollar he had to save. Ted gave an impatient shrug.

"Tell it to Sweeney," he said. He began to walk away; but even as he took his first few

steps he was aware that going to the theater without Donald was going to spoil his evening. He swung around and came back.

"Say," he said, "couldn't I lend you a quarter to buy a ticket?"

Donald made a jump through the gate. "Would you, Ted? I wouldn't have to touch my bank. I could pay you when——"

Ted gave an airy wave of his hand. "Any time," he said; "any time. Hustle, now. We want to get good seats."

Donald ran back to the house for his school books. His whole day had changed. He wasn't going to eat into his money. He was going to be thrifty. And he was going to see the show, anyhow.

"Gee!" he said to himself. "Isn't Ted the good fellow?"

Ted, by virtue of his position as capitalist, took charge of the arrangements. He dictated the pace as they walked toward Chester's little theater, and he stepped up to the box of-

fice window and bought the tickets. They were marked E2 and E4.

"What does the E mean?" Donald asked.

"Beans!" said Ted. "Haven't you ever been to the theater before? That means that the seats are in the fifth row. Shall I mind your ticket?"

"Can't I mind it?" Donald asked.

Ted handed him the pasteboard with very bad grace. But Donald was too happy to bother about how Ted felt. Five times during the morning he took the ticket from his pocket and looked at it.

There was no football practice that afternoon. Don should have started work on a bird house, but Ted wanted him to go down and stand outside the theater and see the scenery carried in. He came back to supper with dancing, excited eyes.

"Come home as soon as the play is over," Mr. Strong ordered.

"Yes, sir," said Don.

When the theater doors were opened he and Ted were the first persons to enter the playhouse. They went down to their seats and craned their necks and looked all around.

"Big place, isn't it?" Don asked in a whisper.

"It is," Ted agreed languidly, "to a fellow who's never been down to the city."

Donald felt abashed. Gee, what a fellow Ted was, going every place and seeing everything. Then the orchestra came out from the pit under the stage and Don felt his heart thump. Was the show going to start? He asked Ted.

"Oh, you hayseed," Ted mocked. "That's the overture. I'll tell you when it's time for the curtain to go up."

After that Don asked no further questions. When the music ceased and the lights were lowered, Ted said: "Here's where she starts."

Don scarcely breathed. The curtain went

up. It seemed to him that he was looking at a river that stretched miles and miles away.

To Don it was glorious. When the hero jumped from the bridge he all but cried out aloud, and at the train wreck scene he trembled with anxiety. Then, at last, the final curtain fell. He sighed and blinked his eyes, and reached under the seat for his cap.

"Great, wasn't it?" he asked.

Ted nodded. For the moment his superior air was gone.

"I'll pay you that quarter," said Don, "just as soon——"

"No hurry," Ted told him. They separated, and Don ran for home. A long time afterward he lay in bed unable to sleep and living again the story of the play.

Next morning the company was gone, and the theater was closed and dark, and Don came back to the everyday life of a workaday world.

"'Oh, you hayseed,' Ted mocked."

Ten days later the football season was over. He had played in another game. He had built three bird houses and had sold one. He had one dollar and sixty-five cents saved, and two completed bird houses in the shop.

When the last game was over, when the last whistle had sounded, Don carried his football togs and stored them away in the attic. For the first time in his life he did not regret the end of a season of play. He was eager to sell bird houses, eager to plunge more fully into the life of Wolf Patrol and of Chester Troop.

Once more he started to canvass for bird houses, taking a sample from door to door. When he had taken eight orders he returned to the shop. It was now time to build.

He delivered the two houses that were already completed. The money in his bank advanced to the astonishing figure of two dollars and sixty-five cents. His lumber bill didn't worry him now, and he was sure of a dollar

earned and saved. That night Barbara walked with him to the village store. He took a minute's peep into the window, looked away and quickly recited a list of the articles displayed. Barbara gave a low laugh.

"Nothing to fear about your observation, Don," she said. "Does that fit you for your second-class examination?"

Don shook his head. "I must know how to make a fire in the open and how to cook meat and potatoes."

"Maybe dad could show you," said Barbara.

To his pleasure his father proved to be well versed in the art of firemaking and of cooking in the open.

Next evening, after Don had finished another bird house, he came upstairs to wash for supper. Barbara met him in the hall.

"You and dad camp out tonight," she laughed. "You're going to get your first lesson in building a fire and cooking."

Don gave a delighted shout at the prospect of camping and hurried out into the yard.

He found his father scraping up dry twigs and leaves and helped him.

"This is the start, Don," he said. "It's like old times."

"Did *you* camp when you were a boy, dad?"

"Often." Mr. Strong bent down and showed Don how to arrange his tinder. Then the boy struck a match, cuffed his hands to shield the tiny flame, and touched it to the dry pile. Carefully he fed the twigs and leaves, and after that some solid sticks.

"What are we going to cook, dad?" Don asked, eagerly watching the dancing flames.

"Potatoes and meat." After a while, when the fire had formed a bed of coals, Mr. Strong showed the boy how to bury the potatoes. Then he had Don cut a stick from a tree, split one end and inserted the meat. Shield-

ing his face from the heat, the scout held it out over the fire to broil.

"Gee, this is great!" he cried in his excitement.

The night, black and starless, came down upon them. Don drew closer to his father, not in fear but in comradeship. Presently the meat was done. The coals were raked away. The potatoes were brought forth.

"Shall we eat here or indoors?" Mr. Strong asked.

"Not indoors, dad," cried Don. So they sat in the dark and watched the fire die away. The boy sighed.

"Pretty good meat, Mr. Cook," his father said as he chewed it.

"Fine! We'll do this again, won't we, dad?"

His father laid an arm across his shoulder. "You bet we will," he said quietly.

Saturday, when he went to Mr. Wall's house for the troop meeting, he told the Scout-

master that he was ready for his second-class tests.

Scout work, that night, was soon over. The boys began to discuss plans for the winter. Mr. Wall promised a snow hike, and later, when the river froze, a hike on ice skates. Alex Davidson suggested that the troop feed birds.

"We're going to put out bird houses in the spring," he argued. "We might just as well start now with food shelters. Each patrol could have charge of its own shelters."

The scouts gave a yell of approval. Mr. Wall smiled.

"The birds win," he said. After a moment he became serious. "I like the idea of feeding birds," he told them. "It's good advertising."

"Advertising?" asked a puzzled voice.

"Advertising," Mr. Wall repeated. "You didn't know that scouts advertise, did you? They do. Every scout advertises the organi-

zation. If he's a good scout, if he lives up to his oath, people who notice what he does will say good things about boy scouts. That's advertising.

"That's one reason it's good to build food shelters and maintain them. People will notice these shelters. They will ask, 'Who did that?' And the answer will be, 'Chester Troop of boy scouts.' That's the sort of advertising we want, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," said Alex Davidson, and the others agreed. It was a new thought.

Don struggled with a problem as he walked home that night. If it was good for scouts to advertise in the right way, wasn't it good for other people? His father, for instance? His father was a good mechanic. His father did good work. Why shouldn't his father advertise?

Before starting for school next day he sank a stout post into the ground over near the north corner.

That afternoon he built a small signboard and gave it a first coat of white paint. Later in the week he nailed the sign to the post. The black lettering was neat and well done:

ROBERT STRONG,

CARPENTER AND JOINER

"Dad!" he called, when it was all finished.

Mr. Strong came up from the carpenter shop.

"Like that?"

His father smiled, pleased. "Of course, I like it. It's a corking sign. Putting some ginger into the business, aren't you?"

"I thought it might help trade," he explained. "That's advertising. Mr. Wall says good advertising is fine."

"That's mighty good advertising," said Mr. Strong heartily. Just as he reëntered the shop

with the smile still on his lips, Alex Davidson came down the road.

"Don!" he called.

Don went over to the fence.

"Some of us have been talking things over," said Alex. "It doesn't seem right to use Mr. Wall's library for meetings. We're going to get our own troop headquarters."

"How?" Don asked eagerly.

Alex shook his head. "Don't know yet. We're all thinking and trying to find a way. See if you can think of something."

Don looked startled. "Gee! I could never think of anything like that."

But the matter stuck in his mind. After supper his mother sent him on an errand. On the way he passed the place where the two trolley lines crossed. This spot was known as the "Transfer Station" because of the number of passengers who changed cars at this point.

A small brick and concrete structure served as a waiting room. It had all the appearance

of newness. In fact, until a week ago a low, frame building with one room— Don gave a low whistle.

"Wonder where that shanty is," he muttered.

It would be just big enough, he thought, for a meeting place. He wondered if the trolley company had any use for it. It had been a miserable apology for a waiting room. The roof had leaked. The door would not stay closed. Some of the window glass had been broken and had not been replaced. Don wondered if the structure had been thrown on the scrap heap. If he asked the trolley company— Gee! what an adventurous thought that was.

That night, after many false starts, he wrote this letter:

Chester Trolley Company,
Chester.
Gentlemen:

I am a member of Chester Troop, No. 1, Boy Scouts of America. You have built a new waiting room at the

Transfer Station, and maybe you have no use for the old wooden waiting room. If you have no use for it, will you please tell me whether you would make a present of it to Chester Troop, No. 1, Boy Scouts of America? We need a meeting room and would be very glad to get it.

Respectfully yours,

DONALD STRONG.

P. S.—I enclose stamp for reply.

Don read the letter over five times. The postscript pleased him especially. It was crisp and businesslike, he thought, to enclose a stamp. He took the letter down to the post office and dropped it in the mail slot.

That was Thursday night. Friday he sold two bird houses. Saturday morning his thirty days were up, and his account with the lumber company was due. He took the money from his bank and walked down to the lumber office.

"I want to settle my account," he said importantly. He counted out the exact amount as though it was an everyday matter for him to call and settle a bill.

The cashier smiled behind his hand. "Quite right, Mr. Strong. Thank you."

Don turned toward the door.

The cashier coughed. "Ah—do you want a receipt?"

Don flushed. What a chump he was to forget a receipt. When he came back to the desk his confidence had vanished. He took the receipt, said a hasty "Thank you," and hurried from the place. He wondered if the clerks in the office would laugh at him after he was gone. He felt a sense of vexation. He had tried to play at business, and he had bungled the game.

However, as soon as he reached home, his vexation passed. A letter awaited him. He read it eagerly:

Mr. Donald Strong,
Chester.

Dear Sir:

The Chester Trolley Company takes pleasure in donating to Chester Troop, No. 1, Boy Scouts of America, a frame building, formerly used as a waiting room. This

building now stands in the rear of the car barn on the Chester Turnpike, and can be removed at any time.

Sincerely yours,

H. R. Black,

Sec. to the President.

Don gave a shout of delight. When Barbara came running to see what was the matter, he showed her the letter and together they rejoiced. But after a few moments Barbara's practical mind began to look ahead.

"How are you going to furnish the place?" she asked.

Don hadn't thought of that. Four bare walls and a bare floor wouldn't do at all.

"I—I guess I know a way," he said.

After dinner he walked to the store of the Chester Furniture Company. A card in the window said that goods were sold for cash or on credit. Don entered.

"I'd like to see some things," he said to the first man he met.

"Certainly," the man gave him a glance of

surprise. "Chairs, tables, beds, sideboards——"

"Oh, just chairs, and a table and—and maybe some benches. We want them for our meeting place—boy scouts, you know. Could we buy them on credit?"

"Just a moment," said the salesman. "You had better talk this matter over with our manager."

So the manager was brought from some place in the rear of the store. He was a short, stout man, well groomed and soft spoken, and he listened attentively while Don told of how Chester Troop had secured its meeting place from the trolley company and now wanted to furnish it.

"You have a leader, I suppose?" the manager questioned.

"A Scoutmaster? Oh, yes, sir. Our Scoutmaster is Mr. Wall."

"Of the high school faculty?"

"Yes, sir."

The manager nodded to the salesman. "I guess it's all right."

For the next half hour Don selected industriously—six plain chairs at fifty cents each, one table at a dollar and a quarter, two benches at one dollar each, and three framed pictures for three dollars. Don thought the pictures were gorgeous.

"They'll look swell on the wall," he said.

"Certainly," the salesman agreed politely.

"How—how much will we have to pay?"

"About fifty cents down and fifty cents a week."

Don drew a sigh of relief. That was all right. If each fellow put in five cents a week the troop could easily pay the fifty cents.

In the front of the store they found the manager waiting. "Does Mr. Wall know of this purchase?" he asked.

"I'm the only one who knows about it so far," Don said proudly.

The manager raised his eyebrows. "Oh!

Well, suppose you talk this matter over with Mr. Wall and with the troop."

"I'm going to," the boy said. "I—I guess we must pass resolutions before we can buy. I wanted to pick out the stuff and find how much it would cost so I could tell the fellows."

"Quite right," said the manager. He held open the door and Don passed out. Gee! how easy it was to get things when you knew how.

Back in the store the salesman gave a shout of laughter. "How is that for nerve?"

The manager shook his head. "Great boy," he said. "Leave that list at the desk. Mr. Wall may O. K. it, and then we'll know just what's wanted. Great Scott, think of a boy walking in here and picking out ten dollars' worth of furniture as though he was spending two cents. What's the world coming to?"

Don, quite unconscious of the stir he had created, walked home well satisfied. A meeting place thoroughly furnished! He had done

it all alone. The Wolf Patrol would be proud of him.

He decided to keep this a secret from Barbara. When the meeting place was all ready and the furniture was in it, he'd take her down and give her a surprise.

The troop was scheduled to meet that night at 8 o'clock. Twenty minutes before the hour Don sat in Mr. Wall's library facing the Scoutmaster. He had kept the good news as long as he could. Now he would have to tell all about it.

As the boy's story grew, Mr. Wall stared up at the ceiling. Once he interrupted sharply.

"Did you sign any papers at the furniture store?"

"No, sir."

"Are they going to send any goods here?"

"No, sir. I told them I wanted to pick out the stuff, but that the troop would have to pass resolutions. I just wanted to know how much it would cost for what we wanted. The man

said fifty cents down and fifty cents a week would be all right."

"But you didn't buy anything or sign any papers?"

"No, sir."

"Oh!" Mr. Wall gave a sigh of relief. "I'll lay this matter before the troop," he said gravely.

Half an hour later, when the meeting was called to order, Mr. Wall faced the scouts.

"We intended tonight," he said, "to have a session on map reading. That, however, will be impossible. I have two important matters to lay before you for your consideration.

"It seems that you have decided that it isn't fair to use my library." Some of the scouts squirmed uncomfortably. The Scoutmaster smiled. "You are welcome to the library as long as you need it. But I am glad to see you trying to do something for yourselves. That's the spirit that counts. That's the spirit that gets ahead.

"Scout Strong has been quite active in this matter. If you will recall, the trolley company took away the old waiting room at the Transfer Station. Scout Strong wrote to the company and asked that the waiting room be given to Chester Troop. The company—— But I had better read their letter."

The boys listened attentively while the letter was read. Don saw several of them look at him and he tried to appear unconcerned.

"That wasn't all that Scout Strong did," Mr. Wall went on. "He decided that a meeting place would need furniture. So he visited the Chester Furniture Company. He picked out six chairs, two benches, a table and three framed pictures. These articles will cost nine dollars and twenty-five cents. The furniture company is willing to deliver the goods if the troop will pay fifty cents on delivery and fifty cents a week.

"As you see, you have the offer of a meeting place, and an offer of furniture." Mr. Wall

was silent a moment. "It is up to you boys to decide just what you want to do."

Don expected the boys to shout that they wanted the meeting place and the furniture as soon as they could get them. Instead, there was a long silence. The scouts looked at each other, and looked away, and shuffled their feet.

"I don't think we ought to take the waiting room," said a hesitating voice.

Don gave a gasp. Not take it? What sort of nonsense was this?

"Scout Morris has the floor," said Mr. Wall.

Don looked at Phil Morris. The patrol leader's face was uncertain and troubled.

"Maybe I don't look at this the right way," he said. "I don't want any fellow to think I'm a goody-goody, but we're scouts, and if that doesn't mean something to us then we're not the right kind of scouts. The scout law says that a scout is thrifty and pays his own way. Well, if we accept this meeting place, we're

not paying our own way. We're accepting charity. We're taking something and giving nothing in return. That doesn't sound scouty."

"Now you're talking," cried a voice.

Phil Morris seemed to take courage at this. "Isn't there some way we can do something that will pay for this house?" he asked.

Don stood up. "That—that old waiting-room was pretty dirty," he faltered. "I thought I was doing a fine stunt when I asked for it. But if it isn't scouty to take it for nothing, maybe if each patrol took turns keeping the new waiting room clean—sweeping it and things like that——"

This time the scouts did shout. They left no doubt that under such a condition they would be glad to get the place.

"We still have the matter of the furniture," reminded Mr. Wall.

Don was not surprised when there was another silence. Without being able to put his

finger on the reason, he thought that there was something wrong with this plan, too.

"We can't buy furniture that way," Alex Davidson said at last.

Don sighed. So there *was* something wrong.

"Buying when you haven't the money," Alex said earnestly, "isn't paying your own way. It's running your nose into debt. Thrift means saving money. Thrift doesn't mean owing money."

"But suppose we are sure we can pay the fifty cents each week?" Don asked.

"Then let's save it," Alex answered. "As fast as we save—— How much do the chairs cost?"

"Fifty cents each."

"As fast as we save fifty cents let's buy a chair. That'll be paying our own way."

Don made no reply.

"I guess there's no need of putting the matter to a vote," Mr. Wall said. "Running into

debt is bad. If a boy had one hundred dollars in the bank and owed one hundred and five dollars, that hundred dollars would not be his."

Don suddenly remembered that he hadn't paid Ted the quarter he had borrowed from him for the theater ticket. His lips twitched. He had one dollar and fifteen cents in his bank after paying his lumber bill. But Ted Carter had a claim on twenty-five cents, and if he paid Ted——

His thoughts were interrupted. The meeting was breaking up. He arose and started out with the others.

"Just a minute, Don," said Mr. Wall.

He waited. After the boys had departed the Scoutmaster came back.

"Don," he said, "I don't want you to go away thinking that your plan was a failure. Your idea of getting that old waiting room was bully. It lacked only a way to make some kind of payment, and you also found the way.

As for the furniture—I'm glad you did that. It gave the troop a chance to think about debt and borrowing. Sometimes boys are careless about those matters."

"Yes, sir," said Don. His eyes were on the rug.

"Just one thing more," said Mr. Wall. "Have your father give you more of the fire and cooking work. A member of the local Court of Honor will be here Wednesday afternoon, and he is going to help me give the second-class test."

Don's eyes did not leave the rug. "I—I can't pass them all," he said in a low voice.

Mr. Wall was surprised. "Why not?"

"I haven't earned and saved a dollar."

"But you told me——"

"I know I did," Don cried desperately. "I have one dollar and fifteen cents in the bank at home. But I owe Ted Carter a quarter. I didn't think——"

"Oh!" said Mr. Wall. "Sit down, Don."

He drew a chair close to the boy. "Suppose you tell me about this. What did you borrow the quarter for?"

"To go to the show."

"Didn't you have some money?"

"Yes, sir. But I didn't want to spend it. I had my lumber bill to pay in thirty days, and I wanted to save my dollar. So I told Ted——"

"What did Ted say?" Mr. Wall interrupted.

"He said——" Don hesitated, and his cheeks turned hot.

"I think I ought to know," the Scoutmaster said quietly. "This wouldn't be carrying tales, Don. What did he say?"

"He said 'Beans! Boy scouts again!' I—I can't make him understand about saving a dollar. He asked me if I could go if he loaned me a quarter, because that wouldn't be breaking into my bank, and I said yes, and he told me to pay him any time. I thought every-

thing was all right. But tonight when you got to talking about——"

"I know," interrupted Mr. Wall. He began to tap his fingers on the arm of the chair. The room became very quiet. Don could hear the tick of the clock in the hall.

"You and Ted have been pretty friendly, haven't you?" the Scoutmaster asked suddenly.

"Yes, sir."

"What did he think about cutting lawns?"

"He laughed at me."

"I see. How much fun did he make of you about football?"

"Not much after——"

"After you came back to the squad?"

Don sighed. "Yes, sir." Gee! how much Mr. Wall knew!

The Scoutmaster's chin grew the least bit hard. "Just what did he call you, Don—names, I mean?"

"He called me 'Mr. Weak-knees.'"

"Anything else?"

" 'Easy mark.' "

"Anything else? Think."

"That's all," said Don. "Ted doesn't mean anything, sir. That's just his way. But I thought, after what you said tonight, that maybe I shouldn't take my second-class tests if I owed Ted a quarter."

"Oh, you can go ahead on the others," the Scoutmaster said, "and perhaps you'll meet the deposit requirement in two weeks. And now as to Ted. I suppose you don't see much of him now that the football season is over?"

"He comes around almost every day," Don answered.

"Does he?" said Mr. Wall. He fell into thought and once more tapped his fingers against the chair. Presently he stood up and Don followed him to the hall.

"I suppose you're working on your bird houses while Ted is there?"

"Yes, sir."

"It must be lonesome for Ted sitting around and watching you working."

"I guess it is," Don answered honestly. "He wants me to stop and talk to him."

"You had better wait a moment," said Mr. Wall abruptly. He walked down the hall and hurried upstairs.

When he came back he carried a thin, paper-wrapped parcel. "A little present for you," he told Don. The boy took it and wondered what it could be. They walked to the door.

"Don," said the man, "there are some scouts who seem to blunder very often, but, for all that, they're——"

"Yes, sir?"

"For all that they're good scouts—mighty good scouts. Good-night."

"Good-night," said the boy.

He walked home with no more worry about what had troubled him. In some way, Mr. Wall had robbed the matter of its sting.

His mind was principally concerned with the package he held snugly under one arm. What could it be? Had Mr. Wall made a similar present to all the other scouts?

When he reached home the sounds from the kitchen told him that his mother and Barbara were setting bread for the morrow's baking. He slipped up the stairs to his room. Eagerly he broke the string around his package and shook away the paper.

He found a heavy, oblong piece of cardboard. On one side of the card was printing. He turned it to the light and read aloud:

A SCOUT IS CLEAN
HE KEEPS CLEAN IN BODY AND THOUGHT
STANDS FOR CLEAN SPEECH
CLEAN SPORT, CLEAN HABITS
AND TRAVELS WITH A CLEAN CROWD

"Now I wonder why Mr. Wall gave me that," he said.

CHAPTER VI

TICKETS

NEXT morning Don hung the sign on his bedroom wall. Later in the day he slipped a quarter from his bank; and when Ted Carter came around that afternoon Don repaid his loan and squared his books.

"No hurry about this," said Ted. "Keep it if you need it."

"I have plenty," Don explained. "My lumber bill is paid, and there's enough stuff in the shop for four more houses."

"Huh!" said Ted. "What are you going to do with all your money?"

"Save it."

"Not for mine. Come on down to the station and we'll drink hot chocolate and eat cakes until the quarter's gone."

But Don, who had asked his father to help him find a good place for a food shelter, declined the invitation.

"Ah!" Ted growled, "you're getting to be an old woman."

Don smiled to himself. Old woman, indeed. He was sure that the coming winter would give him far more fun than it gave Ted.

Winter was not slow in coming—and it settled for a long, cold stay. After the first few weeks of sleighing and snowballing the average boy of Chester found life pretty dull. But Don found everything full of interest. He thought that he had never been so busy and so happy.

All told, he made and sold sixteen bird houses. He passed his second-class examinations. He bought a uniform and a hat. And with all that, the approach of spring found him with almost three dollars in the bank.

As for Chester Troop, it passed a joyous winter. With the help of a wagon and a horse

the waiting room was carted to a field adjoining Mr. Wall's house. They repaired the roof, the windows and the door. One of the scouts unearthed a second-hand coal stove in his cellar, and that was brought to troop headquarters. A hole was cut in the roof, a pipe was run up and they were ready for a fire. All they lacked was coal.

"And coal," Phil Morris had wailed, "is seven dollars and fifty cents a ton."

But the boys refused to be cast down. The Chester Coal Company had a big plant at the bottom of a rather steep road. Alex Davidson thought of a way out of the difficulty.

"We'll make a bargain with the coal company," he said. "We'll keep the sidewalk in front of their office free of snow, and we'll keep the hill clean and covered with ashes. They have a lot of trouble with that hill when it's slippery. It ought to be worth something to them to have that hill kept so their horses can get up and down easily."

"How much ought it to be worth?" Phil asked.

"Ton of coal, anyway," said Alex. "I'll go and see them."

A sharp young man at the coal company's office listened to his proposition.

"You want that coal in advance?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! And how do I know you'll live up to your bargain after you get the coal?"

"We took that old waiting room from the trolley company," Alex said, "and agreed to keep the new waiting room clean for three months. Ask the trolley company if we're living up to our agreement."

"I will," said the young man.

Two days later a ton of coal was dumped in the rear of troop headquarters. That afternoon the scouts built a rough shed to shield their fuel from the weather.

They were sure of a warm meeting place, but they were woefully shy of furniture.

Some old, broken-down chairs had come into their possession, but the scout who sat in one of these usually tumbled out of it if he did not balance himself with skill and judgment. Don sighed often when he thought of the stout chairs he had picked out at the furniture house.

Right after Christmas the troop had its first snow hike. Mr. Wall led them into the woods. They chose a route that took them where there was only about a foot of snow. They went along in single file, and each scout had his turn breaking trail.

It was a glorious hike. The woods were white and clean. The air had a crispy tang. The trees stood like sheeted sentinels. They creaked and groaned under their weight of snow; and once, while the troop was at halt, one of the tree branches snapped and came down to the ground, shaking a powdery, fleecy white mist into their faces.

Don walked over and examined the branch.

"I wonder if there are many of these lying around," he said thoughtfully.

Phil Morris was at his side. "Why?"

"We could cart this stuff to headquarters and build rustic furniture and——"

"And that's about all," Phil cried joyously. "Mackerel, Don, but you're the fellow with the ideas!"

So the hike turned into a search for building material. On the way home the boys decided to haul sleighs into the woods and bring out a quantity of the stout, heavy branches.

Within a week they were hard at work. By degrees chairs took form and shape. The troop house began to look homey and comfortable.

In January they had their ice hike. The river was frozen solid, and they skated six miles upstream to Pine Island. The last mile was a race. A majority of the Wolves reached the island first and that patrol was exempted from cooking the meal. So, while the other

scouts got a fire going and fried bacon, and roasted potatoes, and made cocoa, the Wolves took the lead in a merry game of hockey.

The journey back was slower than the trip out. The scouts were tired. Mr. Wall set the pace and did not push them hard. That night only two scouts came to troop headquarters. The others were content to go to bed early.

Following the ice hike the troop longed for other worlds to conquer. Half a dozen plans were considered only to be thrown aside. They were too tame. Then, one night, Phil Morris came to troop headquarters pretty much excited.

"Say," he said, "why can't we give a show?"

"A what?" Alex Davidson demanded.

"A show, a play. Why can't we?"

"What kind of play?" Alex asked cautiously.

"I don't know—some kind. There are firms that publish plays. You can get a whole play for twenty-five or fifty cents."

"But how will we know what play to buy?" Don asked.

"Write to the publishers. They'll send their catalogs. We can look them over and pick out what we want. The catalogs tell everything—how many characters, how many acts, how many scenes, how much the costumes would cost, whether the scenery is simple, whether the play is easy to act, all that. How about it, fellows?"

Alex sent an appraising glance around troop headquarters. "You couldn't give much of a show in here," he observed.

"Here?" Phil's voice was withering. "Who said anything about in here?"

"Well, where would you give it?"

"In the town hall."

"The *what?*"

"The town hall." Phil looked about him calmly.

The scouts stared at one another. The town hall? One boy began to laugh.

"It's easy," Phil said. The laughter stopped.

"How?" asked a voice.

"We can rent the town hall——"

"Oh, can we?" Alex asked scornfully.

"—— for ten dollars," Phil went on, paying no attention to the interruption. "Other expenses would come to about five dollars. That's a total of fifteen dollars. We can sell tickets for twenty-five cents each——"

"For how much?"

"For twenty-five cents. What's the matter with that?"

"Why, you can get in to see a regular show for twenty-five cents," Don cried. "That's all Ted and I paid."

"Twenty-five cents," Phil said with an air of finality. "That's the price. If we can sell one hundred tickets——"

"Wake up!" cried Alex.

"Wake up nothing," Phil retorted. "One hundred tickets ought to be easy. We have

sixteen scouts in the troop. If each scout sells six tickets there's ninety-six."

"That's right," said one boy thoughtfully.

"It would be fine if we could do it," Alex admitted. He had begun to be impressed. "Suppose we lay this before Mr. Wall."

"Here he is now," said Don.

The scouts turned and faced the door, stood stiffly at attention and saluted. It was their customary form of greeting whenever the Scoutmaster entered troop headquarters. Mr. Wall returned the salute. The moment his hand came down the boys made a run for him.

"Phil wants to give a play," one cried.

"A real play, Mr. Wall."

"In the town hall, sir, and——"

"Twenty-five cents admission, and one hundred tickets——"

Mr. Wall raised his hands. "Just a minute," he implored. "I can't hear you when you all speak at once. Now, Phil, what about this?"

Phil told his story. Mr. Wall listened attentively. When the boy finished, the Scoutmaster glanced around at the group.

"Well, scouts, what do you think of it?" he asked.

"We'd like to," said Alex. "I guess, though, that some of us haven't as much nerve as Phil."

"Afraid you'd fall down?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Wall's mouth twitched into a smile. "A scout is brave," he said.

"Oh!" Alex looked up quickly. "You think we ought to try it, sir?"

"I'd like to see you try it," the Scoutmaster answered. "I'll coach the play, and I'll help make up a program. But, mind, scouts, the actual work of making contracts and getting printing done, and distributing placards, and selling tickets—that's for you to face. It will give you some business experience. In fact, it's my real reason for wanting to see you put on a play."

"We can come to you for advice, can't we?" Alex asked.

Mr. Wall shook his head. "Not unless you're in a corner and can't get out," he said, "and it must be a real corner. You'll have to get your own experience."

"Yes, sir," said Alex.

That night a committee was appointed to write for catalogs. Phil Morris was chairman, and Don and a scout named Robert Sanders served with him.

"I wonder what firms publish plays," Phil said. "We can ask Mr. Wall——"

"We can't," Don laughed. "We must find out for ourselves."

The committee was a long time discovering where this information could be obtained. Finally, on a Saturday afternoon, they went to the village library. There, in the advertising pages of a magazine, they found the names of four publishers of plays. That night four letters left town.

During the week the catalogs began to straggle in. The troop studied them. By degrees disappointment gave place to high hopes.

"Gosh!" said Alex. "There's nothing here but three-act plays. You didn't want that, did you, Phil?"

Phil shook his head gloomily. "I wanted a one-act play," he said. "I thought we'd give a one-act play, and then some knot tying, and some work showing how to break drowning holds, and maybe a little first aid. Scout activities, you know."

Alex nodded. "That's what I thought. There's nothing like that here."

"We'll have to look for it," said Phil.

But it was Alex who put the troop on the track of what they wanted. He came to headquarters one night with a sheet of paper in his hands.

"Look at this, fellows!" he called. "I have a letter here from my cousin in Massachusetts.

He's a scout. He said their troop gave a show and had a one-act scout play."

"Write him," Phil yelled. "Ask him for the name of the play and where they bought it."

Phil wrote the letter. A few days later he had the reply. The play, "Bullhead Learns the Code," was in one act and it had been a success. It could be purchased for fifteen cents.

"Let's get it," cried Phil. "Does that letter say who the publishers are?"

The letter did.

"I'll write," said Phil.

It was not long before the play arrived. Phil read it over and was delighted.

"It's great," he told the troop that night. "All about a fellow *Bullhead Nelson* who kept breaking scout laws while in camp. Finally they bring him up on charges. He is found guilty. He swaggers as though he doesn't care, but he cares, all right. He thinks the

troop will vote to send him home. Instead, one scout pleads for another chance, and he gets it. But the troop goes off on a hike that night and he is left in camp."

"A night scene, eh?" Don asked eagerly.

"You bet," said Phil. "*Bullhead* stays in camp, and while walking around twists his ankle on a piece of fire wood. Gets a bad sprain. Can't walk."

"What then?" asked Alex.

"Then a fire breaks out in the woods near the camp——"

Alex laughed. "That would make a fine scout play, wouldn't it? Scouts are taught to guard all campfires and here's a fire breaking out near where they're camping. That surely would be fine!"

"Stupid!" cried Phil. "Did I say the scouts started this fire?"

"But——"

"Never mind the buts. I'll explain all this. There have been hunters around smoking and

throwing matches about carelessly. That's how the fire starts."

"Oh!" Alex was abashed. "Tell us the rest, Phil."

"Well," said Phil, "there's *Bullhead* with a sprain. He can't get to the fire. If help doesn't come it will spread and the camp will be burned out and everything will be ruined—woods and all. Maybe the scouts out on the hike will be trapped and burned. See?"

One of the scouts breathed deeply. "What happens then, Phil?"

"Why, *Bullhead* sees the lanterns of the scouts burning in the distance. The fire hasn't made much headway, and the scouts can't see it. *Bullhead* thinks if he can attract the attention of the scouts he can get them back. But he hasn't been a good scout. He hasn't really studied signaling. He doesn't know much about the Morse code."

"Gee!" said a voice. "It's getting interesting."

"You bet it is," said Phil. "Well, *Bullhead* has a Handbook and the Handbook has the Morse code. He gets a fire brand and starts to wave it. All at once one of the lanterns in the distance begins to wave. *Bullhead* uses the book and reads the message—'Are you signaling?' "

"Go on, Phil."

"He picks the letters from the Handbook and spells out—'Yes.' Then the scouts signal, 'Who are you?' *Bullhead* has a lot of trouble getting that, but he gets it, anyway. Then he signals, slowly, you know—'Forest has caught fire.' "

"And then the troop comes back?"

"And then the troop comes back," said Phil. "They put out the fire, and tell *Bullhead* he's all right, and *Bullhead* says he's sorry and that he's going to be a real scout from then on. How's that?"

"Fine! But say, Phil, when they signal, 'Who are you?' doesn't *Bullhead* tell them?"

"Sure. I forgot that. He tells them he's *Bullhead* and they signal back, 'What do you want?' Then he tells them about the fire."

There was silence. The scouts looked at one another. They liked the plot. It had a punch. That signaling—say, wouldn't that be great? But, but—— There was a great, big but.

"Is the audience supposed to see the scouts off in the distance with their lanterns?" Alex asked.

Phil nodded. "Yes."

"How can we do that?"

"Easy. It's night. The stage is darkened. Two or three fellows stand in the wings. They have small sticks with the ends dipped in phosphorus. They move them slowly as though they are lights moving in the distance. The audience won't see the scouts standing there because the stage will be dark. All they'll see will be the little glows of moving phosphorus."

"And how about those scouts signaling?"

"That's easy, too. Some fellow will really signal with his phosphorus just making small circles to right and left. See? Just as though I held my finger here and moved it right and left a couple of inches, just enough to show the movements."

Alex's eyes began to light up. "Great! But say, how about that forest fire?"

"Put a little red fire in a pan off stage and light it," said Phil. "Anything else?"

No; there was nothing else. The boys gave a yell and surrounded the bearer of the good tidings.

"How many parts, Phil?"

"Can I get in?"

"Can I have a part?"

"The whole troop will be in it," said Phil. "There are only five big parts: *Mr. Ford,* the scoutmaster; *Bullhead Nelson,* an indifferent scout; *Bert Mason,* patrol leader of the Eagles; *Bill Joyce,* an unlucky scout, and *Joe*

Peters, the scout scribe. But you'll all be in it."

For the next weeks things moved briskly for Troop I, of Chester. The parts were copied from the book. Then came the question of selecting the players. Phil, with the aid of a false mustache, was to play *Mr. Ford.* Alex was selected to be *Bullhead Nelson.* Robert Sanders became *Bert Mason,* patrol leader of the Eagles. Don played the part of the unlucky scout, and Fred Ritter, a second-class scout, became the scout scribe of the play. Everything was now ready for rehearsals.

But there was more than rehearsals to be thought of. The town hall was hired for ten dollars and a Saturday night selected. A visit to a local printer brought the information that one-sheet programs and fifty window placards would cost almost seven dollars. The scouts prepared the copy for the placards and left their order. Five days later the placards were ready. That afternoon the scouts scattered

through the town and placed them in store windows.

Next day Ted Carter met Don. "What's this about a scout play?" he asked.

Don explained.

Ted grinned. "So you and Alex are actors, eh?"

"Oh, we just have parts in a little play——" Don began, but Ted cut him short with a laugh of derision.

"Actors!" he jeered. "Gee! who told you you could act? This will be a scream. This is rich."

"It will be pretty good," Don cried hotly. "Wait until you see the night scene and the signaling——"

"Say," Ted broke in, "is there going to be signaling at night?"

Don nodded.

Ted was impressed. That sounded good, anyway. He wanted to know if he couldn't get a look in at rehearsal.

"We rehearse in Mr. Wall's library," said Don.

"Ah!" Ted mocked, "I wouldn't look at it, anyway. It'll be a scream." He was trying to hide his disappointment. Deep in his heart he was wondering, too, just what the play would be like.

The practice ran on. The scouts had decided to give a first aid exhibition as the opening number of the program, and to follow this with knot tying. After that would come the play, and then an exhibition of how to break drowning grips. At a signal the scouts were to mass at one side of the stage, Phil Morris was to appear dressed as Uncle Sam and carrying the Stars and Stripes, and the scouts were to salute and pledge allegiance to the flag. That would be the climax of the evening.

Eight scouts were selected for the knot tying act. The entire troop would appear in the first aid number, one-half the boys as patients and the other half as scouts rendering first

aid. Eight more boys would illustrate the grips, four showing the grips a drowning person secures and four showing how the same grips could be broken. The scouts thought it was a mighty well-balanced program.

Two weeks before the play the tickets were printed and distributed. Phil Morris begged the scouts to sell as many as they could.

"The more we sell," he reminded them, "the more money we'll make."

Robert Sanders had set himself a mark of fifteen tickets. He was going to sell that many, he confided to Don, or break his neck trying. As he and Don walked home from the meeting at which the tickets had been distributed he counted on his fingers a list of those he thought would buy. When he finished counting Don said:

"That's only twelve."

"Others will show up," Bob said confidently. "I'll find them."

The boys came to a little store kept by Crip-

ple Jerry. It was a small place, not any too bright, and with something of an air of mystery about it. In fact, cripple Jerry was a mystery, too. Nobody knew his last name. Nobody knew from whence he had come. He had appeared in Chester and had opened his little store and had stocked it with candy, notions, pads, pencils and similar odds and ends. On fair days he brought a chair out to the sidewalk and sat there, but that was as far as travel ever took him.

"Say," said Bob, "I think I'll try in here."

Don followed him in.

"Hello, Jerry," Bob called.

The cripple smiled brightly. "Hello!"

"The scouts are going to give a play," the boy went on. "A good play, Jerry. You'd have a fine time seeing a play like that."

Jerry shrugged his shoulders.

"Tickets are only twenty-five cents," Bob went on.

Jerry looked uncomfortable. The boy took

a bunch of tickets from his pocket. They were held together with a rubber band. He tossed one on the counter.

"Better buy one, Jerry," he said. "Only twenty-five cents."

The storekeeper hesitated. It was plain that he did not want the ticket. Nevertheless, after a moment, he took twenty-five cents from his pocket. Bob accepted the coin.

"First blood, Don," he called. "You'll like it, Jerry. So long."

The boys turned toward the street. Then, for the first time, they saw the Scoutmaster. Mr. Wall was standing just inside the door.

"A bottle of ink, Jerry," he said. "Wait a minute, boys. I'll be with you."

They all walked out to the sidewalk.

"Tickets going well?" Mr. Wall asked casually.

"Just sold my first one," Bob answered.

"I heard you," the Scoutmaster answered.

Somehow, Bob felt his face flush. He

wanted to look up at Mr. Wall, but he couldn't.

"It's funny about tickets," the man mused aloud. "There's Jerry. He doesn't make much of a living. I suppose he just manages to keep body and soul together. Yet he spent twenty-five cents for a ticket to see a show. He has to sell almost two dollars' worth of goods to make twenty-five cents. I wonder why he bought that ticket."

Bob said nothing.

"If he was going to the show it would be different," the Scoutmaster continued. "But he never goes anywhere. He can't. If he goes away he has to close up the store."

"He—he didn't say he didn't want the ticket," Bob stammered.

"Perhaps he did want it," Mr. Wall agreed brightly. "No knowing. Maybe he's going to take a night off and watch us. Perhaps, on the other hand, he said to himself, 'If I don't buy a ticket the boys will get sore and deal

elsewhere.' I knew a fellow, once, who sold tickets for a picnic, and he went to all the stores where his mother dealt and wanted them to buy tickets just because of that fact. That's what we call sandbagging. But, of course, if Jerry wants to dissipate and take a night off—— Hello! Here's my corner. Good-night, boys."

"Good-night, sir," they answered.

Don shook his head. Golly! Wasn't Mr. Wall the one to make you think? He was glad that he had had no hand in the selling of that ticket. He wondered what Bob would do.

Bob walked along as though he was going to do nothing but get home as quickly as he could. However, in the middle of the next block his steps began to slow up. Before the next corner was reached he came to a halt. Suddenly, as though he had made up his mind, he turned in his tracks.

"Wait for me, Don," he called. "I'm going back to give Jerry his quarter."

CHAPTER VII

ONE BIG NIGHT

THE story of the deal with Cripple Jerry spread through the troop. Bob told it himself. After that there was a new method of handling tickets.

"Of course," said Alex, "a fellow can sell in his own family any way he pleases. He can go to friends and ask them to buy, too. But keep away from the tradesmen. They have our signs. We can leave a couple of tickets so that if anybody wants one it's there to be bought. Outside of that, though, we'll do no soliciting. Anybody who wants to see our show won't stay away because he hasn't bought a ticket in advance."

The rehearsal went on. There was a broken-down piano in the town hall, and a young man

was found who, for two dollars, agreed to perform the night of the performance.

"Now we're going some," said Phil. "Orchestra and all. How are the tickets selling, fellows?"

They weren't going any too well.

"You can't tell, though," said Alex. "A lot of people may pay at the door."

Fortunately for the troop, the town hall stage boasted the scenery needed for the play. A drop, painted with trees to represent a forest, made the background, and trees stood in the wings. Two tents, staked on the left side, gave a camping atmosphere. In the center of the stage was a campfire. An incandescent bulb, getting its power from an electric-light wire running from the wings, served admirably for the fire once it had been surrounded by sticks and thin red paper.

The night before the play there was a dress rehearsal. The paper and sticks of the fire had to be manipulated half a dozen times be-

fore the red, glowing effect of a camp fire could be secured. After that, though, things went swimingly.

The scouts had found, while experimenting at troop headquarters, that sticks stuck in phosphorus would not answer for the big scene. They had thought of small pocket flashlights, but the lights, when tried, seemed too bright and too big. Finally Alex hit upon the happy idea of pasting heavy black paper on the bull's-eye glass of the flashlight so that only a small piece of the glass let light come through. This acted so well that it was at once adopted.

"It's great," Phil cried enthusiastically. "We're supposed to be in forest country. When *Bullhead* watches the scouts, the lights ought to appear and reappear the way they would if fellows were walking among trees. We can get that disappearing effect by flashing the lights."

At first the scouts had been worried about

how *Bullhead* would do his signaling. It was impossible to have a real campfire on the stage, for the fire laws of the village would allow no real flame. Therefore no burning brand could be plucked from the fire. However, a flashlight solved that, too. A long, tube light was bought, and red paper was so arranged that the bull's-eye end looked like a glowing ember. All *Bullhead* had to do was to reach to the fire, press the button of his flashlight, pull the light away and there was his burning ember with which to make his signals.

"You can take it from me," said Phil, "we sure are some bunch. If the crowd comes tomorrow we're all right."

Next night every scout was at the town hall long before the show was to start. Barbara had wanted to clean Don's uniform, but he had laughed and had shaken his head.

"We're supposed to have been in camp a while," he explained. "A scout who had been

camping four or five days wouldn't have a spick and span uniform."

When Don reached the hall he found the doors already open. One scout, sitting behind a table, was ready to sell tickets. Another scout was at the door as ticket-taker.

"Anybody here yet?" Don asked eagerly.

Nobody had yet presented a ticket of admission.

Don walked back to the stage. He looked gloomily at Phil.

"Nobody here yet," he said.

"Wake up!" Phil laughed nervously. "It isn't seven yet, and the show starts at eight-fifteen."

The scouts arrived in groups. They were fidgety and noisy and keyed to a high pitch. A dozen arguments broke out under the nervous tension. Finally Mr. Wall arrived and quieted them down.

"Easy," he said. "Don't get flustered. It's just as easy to do your work with people

looking on as it is to do it when you're alone."

"It—it feels different," one of the scouts answered.

Phil had his eye at a peep-hole in the curtain. "First man has arrived," he whispered hoarsely.

They all took a look. Yes, there was one of the village letter-carriers. After that they all kept taking looks. The size of the audience increased—six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four.

"What time is it?" Don asked at last.

"Five of eight," said Phil. "Only twenty-four. Gee! It will be a frost."

Mr. Wall laughed. "The crowd always comes in the last fifteen minutes," he said.

The ticket-taker came back excitedly. The reporter for the Chester *Chronicle* was at the door and demanded free admission.

"Make him pay his quarter," said Phil. "We'll need all the quarters we can get by the looks of the audience."

Mr. Wall laughed again. "Press representatives are always given the courtesy of admission," he said, and the ticket-taker hurried back to the door.

Don took a peep. There, in the first row, was Ted Carter.

Suddenly the piano began to play. From the hall the clatter grew louder. There was the sound of shuffling feet, of banging chairs, of talk and laughter. Phil took a peep.

"Say," he cried, "they're coming now."

The hall was beginning to fill. Mr. Wall shooed the boys off the stage. He lined them up in the order in which they would march out for the first aid demonstration.

The piano stopped playing. There was an interval of silence. The noise of the audience was hushed. The piano started again. Up went the curtain.

"Ready?" Mr. Wall called softly.

"Re—ready," sounded a chorus of shaky voices.

"Go out," the Scoutmaster ordered.

Half the troop filed out on the stage and saluted. A ripple of applause ran through the audience. The scouts separated until they had taken positions four feet apart. Mr. Wall's whistle sounded from the wings. Instantly the scouts dropped down on the stage, some kneeling, some sitting. One scout stretched off at full length.

The whistle sounded again. Out from the wings rushed the other half of the troop, haversacks on their backs, staffs in their hands. Haversacks were unslung and opened, bandages were taken out.

And then began a great dressing of imaginary wounds—head, arms, feet, hands, throat and body. Two scouts knelt beside the boy who lay at full length. They felt him gingerly.

"Broken leg," said one.

"Splints," said the other.

While the audience looked on splints were

fashioned and adjusted. Meanwhile, the other scouts had finished the minor dressings. Each scout brought his patient to the footlights, saluted, and then led the injured one off stage. Finally only the two scouts working on the injured leg were left.

They had finished their dressing. Quickly they made a coat stretcher. The injured boy was placed in this, gently lifted and carried off.

A thunder of applause swept through the hall.

It was now time for the knot tying.

The curtain was lowered. As only eight boys were to take part in this demonstration, it had been decided that they should work outside the curtain. Thus, while the knot tying act was on, the stage could be set for the play.

The eight boys went out, each boy carrying lengths of rope. Quickly they set to work. The knots were soon tied. The scouts stood up and saluted.

It had been a tame exhibition so far as the audience was concerned.

"Gee!" Ted Carter said audibly. "We can't see what they're tying from here. How do we know the knots are right?"

Mr. Wall's whistle sounded. Instantly the scouts began to toss to the audience the knots they had fashioned. When the last was gone they disappeared. Out in front men and women examined the knots—here a sheepshank, here a square, here a carrick bend, here a fisherman's. Slowly, as the work was seen and appreciated, the applause grew in volume. The scouts had made their second hit.

Now came the big moment of the night. Slowly the curtain arose showing the camping scene. Fred Ritter, as *Joe Peters,* scout scribe, was sitting on the ground with a book on his knee in which he was writing. A moment after the curtain arose he sighed and closed the book.

"I'm glad the fellows are all busy else-

where," he said. "It gives me a chance to get my records straightened out. That was a bully good supper we had tonight."

Enter Robert Sanders as *Bert Mason,* leader of the Eagle Patrol. It developed, as *Mason* and *Peters* talked, that some of the scouts were cleaning the pots and pans from supper, and that others were out getting wood for the night. From the wings on the left came faint shouts and cries and a voice yelling, "Stop that, *Bullhead*!"

"*Bullhead* is in trouble again," said *Peters.*

"He's always in trouble," said *Mason.* "We can't get him to do anything. He won't try for his second-class—— Say, has he been studying his Morse signaling code?"

"I had him a while this afternoon," *Peters* answered, "but he soon quit. You can't do anything with him."

Enter from the right Don Strong as *Bill Joyce,* an unlucky scout. He had a bundle of wood and dropped it behind the fire.

"What's the matter with *Bullhead?" Mason* asked.

"He won't chop wood," the unlucky scout answered. "He's throwing his ax at trees, playing Indian."

"He'll hurt somebody," said *Mason.* "I don't know how he ever became a scout.'

From the left two gun shots sounded. The scouts pricked up their ears and wondered what it could be. A voice was heard off stage calling to somebody to be more careful.

"Here comes *Mr. Ford,"* cried *Mason.*

Enter Phil Morris as the *Scoutmaster.* The mustache, pasted on his upper lip, made him look years older.

"A couple of gunners out there," he explained. "They were lighting their pipes and throwing matches away that were still burning. I told them to be careful or they might start a fire. Well, how have things been going?"

Mason explained that *Bullhead* had been

cutting up. *Joyce,* the unlucky scout, went back to his companions. *Mr. Ford* frowned.

"We'll have to do something about *Bullhead.* He's becoming impossible."

Another yell sounded from the right—this time a yell of pain. The *Scoutmaster* and the two scouts started for the wings, but *Joyce* came running onto the stage holding his wrist. Red ink had been dabbed on to look like blood.

"Quick, there, fellows!" called the *Scoutmaster.*

Mason and *Peters* grabbed the unlucky scout.

"It isn't the artery," said *Mason.* "See, the blood doesn't spurt. All it needs is cleaning and bandaging."

"How did it happen?" the *Scoutmaster* asked.

Joyce explained that *Bullhead* had been throwing his ax. The scouts came on the stage from right and left, those of the wood-chopping party carrying wood, and

those from the dish washing work wiping their hands. Finally in strolled Alex Davidson as *Bullhead Nelson.*

Bullhead was swaggering as though he did not care. He told the *Scoutmaster* that he had not meant to hurt *Joyce,* but anyhow, he had told him to get out of the way. *Mr. Ford* lectured him. He hung his head and shuffled and seemed to pay no attention. Finally *Mr. Ford* explained that he had established this camp near a railroad so that if any scout made trouble he could be put on a train and sent home. *Bullhead* looked startled. However, he tried to pretend that he did not care.

The troop then sat to hear the case against *Bullhead* and vote on his fate. The scouts told of the boy's many shortcomings. He didn't obey the scout laws, he didn't do this, he didn't do that. Finally the scribe called the roll. One by one the scouts voted to send *Bullhead* home. He tried to sneer at them *Joyce's* name was called.

The unlucky scout stood up, his injured wrist bandaged. *Bullhead* gave him an insolent stare.

"Fellows," said *Joyce,* "if we're going to drop fellows just because they're a bit wild, then the scout movement fails. The scout movement wants to make better fellows of all of us. It wants to make a better fellow of *Bullhead,* too. I move that he be given another chance."

Bullhead looked up. His mouth dropped with surprise. Then, seeing the other scouts looking at him, he tried to swagger. But the swagger was not very pronounced. *Bullhead* had been touched.

"Start the roll call again," cried another scout.

This time the scouts voted to keep *Bullhead* with the troop.

Mr. Ford gave them all a friendly talk—he praised the troop for the stand it had taken, and he said a good word for *Bullhead.*

That surprised scout kept his eyes on the ground.

"There's a night hike on for this evening," said *Mr. Ford.* "I'm glad *Bullhead* will remain with us. But there ought to be some punishment for throwing his ax. I think he had better stay home from the hike."

Bullhead muttered something. The *Scoutmaster* put a hand on his shoulder.

"No more trouble, *Bullhead?*"

"Aw!" said the boy, "I ain't never had a chance—until now."

"And now?" the *Scoutmaster* asked.

"Throw me a Handbook somebody," said *Bullhead.* "I'm going to study my Morse."

The troop prepared to depart for its hike. Lanterns were lighted. The troop paraded off and left *Bullhead* alone. He sat by the fire and kept mumbling the Morse code to himself.

The stage grew dark. *Bullhead* got up, began to wave one hand to illustrate as he mut-

tered, and stepped on a piece of fire wood. He fell and groaned. He tried to stand and fell again.

"Gee!" he said. "My foot's sprained. I can't walk."

Slowly a red glow grew in the wings. At first *Bullhead* did not understand. Then he saw a tiny flame. The brush was on fire. The hunters had thrown away one match too many.

After that the action was dramatic—the boy trying to crawl toward the fire and his foot preventing. Then his search for the camping party, and then the glow of lights that moved, and went out, and moved again. He saw them. Holding to the stake ropes of a tent, he got to one foot with his fire brand and began to signal. The lights in the distance paid no attention. He kept waving and waving and waving.

Suddenly the lights all grouped together. Then one separated. It began to wave.

"A signal," cried *Bullhead.* "They see me. Gee! But I can't read Morse. Where's my Handbook?"

He found it. Laboriously he spelled—"A-R— Gee! I can't get that next letter. I can't get that one either. O-U—I got it now. Are you— What's this? S-I-G— Are you signaling? That's what they mean."

Slowly he signaled back his "Y-E-S."

Not a sound could be heard as the messages went back and forth. Finally the scouts knew that there was a fire. The lights bunched excitedly. Then they moved back, flickering and flashing quickly as though the boys were running through the trees. Next faint calls sounded, then louder, louder. Then the troop burst out on the stage.

"Over there, scouts," called *Mr. Ford.* "Beat it out."

The troop disappeared into the other wing. A roar of applause shook the house. The red glare died down.

Presently the scouts came back dirty and blackened from their fire-fighting. The stage became lighter as though from the glow of their lanterns. And there, with words of praise in his ears, *Bullhead* said:

"Be prepared. That's the stuff. If I had studied my Morse I'd have been able to signal all right. But I wasn't prepared, and if I hadn't a Handbook it would have been all up with us. Be prepared—that's my motto now. I'm going to be a real scout."

The curtain fell.

Flushed and excited the boys clamored around Mr. Wall in the wings. Had they made a success of it?

"Listen," said the Scoutmaster.

From the audience came a hurricane of handclapping. Don took a peep through the hole in the curtain. Ted Carter looked as though he had experienced a whale of a surprise. Don chuckled.

The last act—drowning grips and how to

break them—went on. Mr. Wall explained each grip and each break to the audience. When the act was finished the scouts quietly retired to one side. Scouts not in the act joined them. Out from the other wing came Phil Morris holding the Stars and Stripes. The scouts saluted. Speaking in chorus they pledged allegiance to the flag, and the final curtain fell.

Oh, but they were a happy crowd. Don hurried into an overcoat and met Barbara and Beth and his father and his mother outside.

"Was it good?" he asked breathlessly.

"It was fine," said Barbara. "Alex was fine as *Bullhead Nelson.*"

"Wasn't he?" Don did not think to ask how he had been, and Barbara smiled and nudged her father. Mr. Strong smiled, too.

Next night the troop met at headquarters to figure out how they had fared financially. First Phil was asked to read a list of expenditures.

"Ten dollars for the hall," he said. "Fifty cents each to the two fellows who worked the curtain for us. Two dollars to the pianist. The placards and programs were $6.80, and the tickets cost $1.24. Incidentals were $7."

"What incidentals?" one scout asked.

"Everything. The grease paint, the false mustache, red fire, the pan the fire burned in, what we paid to have an electrician string an electric cord for us from the wings to the camp fire, the flashlights—"

"I guess that's enough," said Mr. Wall. "What's the total, Phil?"

"Thirty dollars and five cents."

Some of the scouts whistled and looked at the Scoutmaster. Had they taken in that much?

"Tickets sold by scouts before the show," Mr. Wall said, "brought in $16.75. Sixty-seven tickets were sold."

The scouts looked anxiously. There was a big difference between $16 and $30.

"There were quite a few tickets sold at the door," Mr. Wall smiled. "To be exact, just one hundred and five, for a total of $26.25.

"Then we made a profit," cried Alex.

"We made a profit," said the Scoutmaster. "Our expenditures were $30.05, and our receipts were $43 even. We have a surplus of $12.95."

The scouts cheered wildly and slapped each other. Twelve dollars! Mackerel! they were rich.

"Fellows," said Mr. Wall, "I want to congratulate you. We could have earned more. To your credit let this be said—you didn't. Nobody was pestered into buying a ticket. No butcher or grocer or candy store man was badgered into parting with a quarter. Nobody was sandbagged. A scout is clean—and every penny we took was clean."

There was no cheering now. The meeting broke up quietly. In twos and threes the scouts went out of headquarters. Bob Sand-

ers walked alone. Clean money! Wasn't it fine that he had gone back to Cripple Jerry that night?

Be prepared! That was the stuff—just as *Bullhead Nelson* had said in the play. Be prepared for anything, so that no matter what came it found you clean.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEANING OF THE SIGN

FOLLOWING the play the winter passed quickly. While waiting for spring to unlock the outdoors, Chester Troop turned its attention to telegraphy. Two sets were rigged up in troop headquarters, and many amazing messages were sent and received—that is, it was amazing to compare the message that had been sent with the message that the scout at the other end claimed to have received.

At the high school the coming of spring was awaited with impatience. By the middle of March the snow was gone. Then came a week of balmy days. Mr. Wall called for candidates for the high school nine.

Joyously Don brought his old grammar school uniform down from the attic. He

tried it on in his room. It was tight across the shoulders and not any too long in the legs.

"Gee!" he muttered. "I'm bigger than last year."

That first day he went to the field a trifle on edge. He said to himself, "I thought I'd be a big gun in football, but I wasn't much more than a toy pistol." A moment later another thought rushed into his mind: "What if somebody comes along who can pitch a shade better than I can?"

But soon his fears were dispelled. The moment he reached the field Mr. Wall came toward him.

"Fifteen minutes' work for you," he said. "Straight balls and no speed. Get your arm into a sweater as soon as you stop."

"Yes, sir," said Don. His face broke into a grin. He knew what that order meant. Mr. Wall valued him as a pitcher. He didn't want him to hurt his arm.

So he pitched lazily to Alex Davidson.

But, though he used no speed, he did strive to put that ball where he wanted it to go. Alex held up the big glove as a target, and he pitched for the mark. The catcher gave a shout.

"That's control, Don."

Mr. Wall looked across at them and smiled quietly.

At the end of fifteen minutes Don quit. He stood around and watched the practice.

Ted Carter was at first base—and oh, what a player Ted was. He pulled them out of the air; he dug them out of the ground. It seemed impossible to get a ball past him. He killed hits that were away over toward second. He raced in for bunts and flipped them backwards. He was here, there and everywhere. The encouraging ring of his voice swept across the diamond. He was the livest kind of a live wire. The moment a baseball glove went on his hand he seemed to be a different boy. The slouch dropped from

his shoulders. His eyes brightened. His feet became nimble and no longer dragged.

After a while he came over to Don wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Going home?" he asked.

"Are you through?" Don asked.

"You bet. Catch me doing too much the first week and putting myself on the fritz. How's your wing?"

"All right," said Don.

Ted laughed. "You're a wise bird, too. It didn't take you long to quit. I guess you'll do most of our pitching. Any time you go in there, keep pegging all the time. This nine is going to be a bunch of hams."

"Hams?" Don gasped. "Why, you'll be on first and—"

"I can't play the whole infield," Ted announced modestly.

"No," said Don, weakly; "I guess not." So that was the kind of a fellow Ted was, eh?

Next day, when Don came to the field,

Andy Ford was pitching to Alex. Don asked no questions. He did his fifteen minutes of hurling and stepped aside. Ted dropped out of the practice and came toward him.

"Andy's out for pitcher," Ted whispered. "Here's your chance to get square. He beat you out for end. Now you rub it into him."

Don said nothing. He didn't exactly like Ted's talk of rubbing in, but at the same time there was no denying the fact that Andy *had* taken a place on the football team away from him. He wouldn't rub anything into Andy, but he *would* like to beat him out.

Gradually, as the practice ran along, the team took shape. Ted, of course, played first; Roberts was on second, Lane covered short, and Leonard, the football captain, was at third. The outfield did not look any too strong; Grunow, slow and lumbering, was in right, and McMaster, fat and dumpy, was in left. Burns, the best of the three, was in center.

"They're a fine trio," Ted said in disgust.

"We'll have to plant a bunch of balls to help those fellows."

"Plant them?" asked Don. He and Alex and Ted were walking home from the practice.

"Sure; didn't you ever hear of that?" Suddenly Ted gave a cackle. "Say, we could do it."

"Do what?" Alex demanded.

"Plant balls for those fellows. You know how the grass grows in the summer, don't you, right in back of the outfielders—high and rank? If a ball gets past the outfielders and gets into that grass the runner's on third before they find it. And with this bunch fielding, good night!"

"But what about planting the balls?" Don asked.

"I'm coming to that," Ted said. "We can plant three balls—one in right, one in left, one in center. Then, if a ball goes into the high grass, all the fielder has to do is to run

in, grab the planted ball and throw it out. We'd win lots of games."

"Do we want to win that way?" asked Alex.

Ted bristled. "Why not?"

"Because it wouldn't be fair," Alex answered.

And at that Ted gave a howl of derision.

"Put that proposition up to Mr. Wall," Alex retorted.

"Beans!" Ted's face grew red. "I guess he'd give a couple of winks to win a game."

"Ask him," said Alex.

Ted's face grew redder. "Ah!" he growled, "you give me a pain."

Don was glad when Ted turned away at the next corner and went off by himself. Don didn't like these spats. Ted was his friend, of course, but Ted didn't seem to show up very well when it came to an argument with Alex.

After the first-baseman's departure Alex was silent for a while. Then:

"Your drop was breaking fine today," he said.

Don smiled with pleasure. "How was the in?"

"That was fine, too." The catcher sighed. "I wish Andy had some of your stuff."

"Maybe he'll get better as he goes along," said Don.

But he knew in his heart that Andy would not improve. Andy had a habit of moving his wrist about as he wound up. It slowed his delivery and took the snap out of his curves.

Two days later, during the practice, Mr. Wall discovered the fault. All afternoon he labored with Andy, trying to help the boy rid himself of his pitching fault. After the practice, Don and Alex left the field together. Ted Carter overtook them. He and Alex had smoothed out their former trouble.

"I guess Andy will get some place now," the catcher said. "I tell you, it takes Mr.

Wall to see things. None of us noticed Andy's fault."

"I did," said Don.

"You did?" Alex gave a long stare. "And you wouldn't tell him?"

"Why should he?" Ted demanded.

That's how Don felt. Why should he? Weren't he and Andy rivals for honors? But, for all that, he wished that somebody beside Ted Carter had spoken up that way in his defense.

"All right," said Alex, "if that's how you feel about it."

Next day, in the practice, Don thought that Alex was rather cool.

"Between you and me," said Ted Carter, "that Alex Davidson is a little snipe. Some day he's going to get me mad."

Don did not answer. Secretly, he had begun to wonder if Alex wasn't a better sort of a chap than Ted. Alex had such a calm, sure way about him, and he never knocked.

The first game brought Bloomfield High School to Chester. The night before Don had been told that he was to pitch. After school he came hurriedly to the field. Soon the Bloomfield boys appeared. They were a thick-set lot, and they swaggered as though the game was a mere formality and that it was already won.

A plain bench had been placed on either side of the diamond—one for the visitors, one for the Chester boys. Mr. Wall sat on the end of the Chester bench, pulled his hat down over his eyes and prepared to watch. He never coached during a game. Once the battle started, his boys were left to fight their own way.

Roberts, the second-baseman, had been elected captain. As the umpire swept the dust from the plate, he drew the players around him.

"How about you, Don?" he asked. "These fellows look pretty big. Can you hold them?"

Don surveyed the rival team. "I guess so."

"Sure he can," said Ted. "If any fellow gets fresh with you pitch one for his head."

"That isn't baseball," said Alex.

Ted laughed.

The first batter to face Don lined out a single. The next boy bunted.

Ted was in on the ball like a flash. His hand jerked, and the sphere flew to Roberts, forcing the boy who had been on first. Roberts tried to make the return throw to Ted for a double play; but the runner, zigzagging and throwing his arms into the air, made a throw impossible. The third Bloomfield boy was at the plate.

"Dirty playing," said Alex.

The batter grinned. "Ah! be a sport" he said.

He raised a foul that Alex caught, and the next boy struck out.

The Chester boys came to the bench. "This is some bunch," said Ted.

Mr. Wall made no comment.

The game developed into a bitter struggle. The Bloomfield players resorted to every mean trick they knew. They baited the umpire; they bothered Alex by wriggling their bats in front of his mask; they bumped into runners on the baselines. Twice they tried to trip. Their coaching was nasty and offensive.

The Chester boys, playing a cleaner game, led at the start of the eighth inning by a score of 8 to 6.

Then the Bloomfield lads, on infield hits and two outs, filled the bases.

"Watch them now," cried Ted. "Watch them now."

The next batter dribbled a roller toward third base.

"Yie!" Ted cried. "That makes three out."

Leonard came in, scooped the ball, drew back his arm, and threw wildly. He ran to the umpire.

"My arm was jerked," he shouted indignantly. "That runner jerked my arm as I was about to throw."

"I didn't see it," said the umpire.

"He was behind me," the third-baseman explained.

The umpire waved him aside. "I didn't see it."

Two runs were in, and two were on the bases. The score was tied. Don, mad clear through, put so much effort into his pitching, that the next batter struck out.

The nine came to its bench. Leonard sat down beside Mr. Wall.

"He jerked my arm, sir."

"Play the game," said the coach.

Ted Carter had paused for an argument with one of the Bloomfield players. Now he came in and sat down.

"Go back at them," he advised angrily. "Slide into the bags. Knock the ball out of their hands."

Mr. Wall made no comment.

Burns was up first. He tapped to the pitcher and was out. Alex Davidson came next. He hit hard and he hit far, but a fielder was under the ball when it fell. Don advanced to the plate.

His bat met the first ball. He knew that he had hit solidly. He ran toward first. The coacher threw up both hands. It was the signal to keep going.

So Don ran to second. McMaster, who was coaching at third, gave him the signal to keep coming. He raced toward third.

And then, all at once, McMaster became the picture of alarm. The ball was on its way. He took a quick look at the throw and a quick look at Don.

"Slide!" he yelled. "Slide!"

Out of the corner of his eye Don saw the shadow of the flying ball. He tried to run faster. He had to be safe. It meant too much to reach third in the last half of the

eighth with the score a tie. These fellows had been so unfair!

He seemed to hear Ted advising the bunch to go back at them. Ah! that was it. A little of their own medicine. Knock the ball—

He slid. A cloud of dust blurred the players and the bag, and then the ball rolled out of the cloud.

"Safe!" ruled the umpire.

The Bloomfield third-baseman roared with rage. "He knocked the ball out of my hands."

"Safe!" said the umpire again. He walked back to his place. "Play ball."

The Bloomfield boys fumed and threatened. Don stood on the bag and grinned. A few minutes later when the game was resumed he crept away from the base. And when Lane chopped a hit into right field, he came home with the run that put his nine in the lead.

The bench gave him a rollicking welcome.

Roberts popped for the third out. Ted jumped up.

"Keep them from scoring this time and it's all over," he exulted.

Don kept them from scoring. Only three boys faced him, and then Blomfield left the field defeated by a score of 9 to 8.

Mr. Wall stretched his legs, and arose. The players, laughing and happy, came in for their sweaters. Soon they were grouped around him.

"I suppose," he said quietly, "that you expect me to tell you how pleased I am at your success. I am afraid I cannot. There may be honor in defeat, but there is no honor in a dirty victory."

He walked away and left them there. Alex Davidson stared blankly at the others.

"But *they* were the fellows who played dirty," he protested.

Don felt a burn in his cheeks. Every boy there looked concerned—every boy except

Ted, and Ted's face wore a wise grin. Don turned toward home.

"Wait for me," Ted called.

"Can't," Don answered over his shoulder. "I'm in a hurry." He quickened his stride.

A deep, sickening sense of shame had swept over him. The others might be in doubt as to what Mr. Wall meant, but he knew, for he had knocked the ball from the third-baseman's hands. And Mr. Wall had said it was a dirty victory.

In the excitement of the game it had seemed justifiable to rough that third-baseman and make him drop the ball. Ted Carter had advised——

Don drew in his breath. That was it—Ted Carter had advised. He hadn't thought of sliding into the player until Ted had counseled such action. And Mr. Wall's condemnation hadn't bothered Ted a bit. Ted had grinned as though he were amused.

Don's mind began to go back over other

things that Ted had advised—planting balls in the outfield, for instance. That day Alex had spurned the suggestion. Oh, why hadn't he had the sense today to see the shame in Ted's proposal?

And Mr. Wall called it a dirty victory.

Don's spirit writhed as though it had been lashed. He wanted his Scoutmaster's respect. Mr. Wall had begun to fill a place in his life that seemed to mean more and more each day. If Ted hadn't——

"I mustn't blame Ted," Don gulped. "He didn't make me do it. It's my own fault."

But for all that, deep in his heart he did blame Ted. It had been a dirty victory, and he, Don Strong, one of Mr. Wall's scouts, was the one who had made it dirty.

When he reached home Barbara was sweeping rugs on the porch. "Who won?" she asked.

"We did," said Don. He hurried past her and up to his room.

THE MEANING OF THE SIGN

For a great thought had suddenly come to him. He tossed his cap on the bureau, and walked over to the sign and stood in front of it for a long time. He read it aloud, just as he had done the night he had brought it home.

A SCOUT IS CLEAN,
HE KEEPS CLEAN IN BODY AND THOUGHT,
STANDS FOR CLEAN SPEECH,
CLEAN SPORTS, CLEAN HABITS,
AND TRAVELS WITH A CLEAN CROWD.

"I know why Mr. Wall gave me that," he said slowly. "I must chum with a clean crowd, and Ted isn't that kind."

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER MEANING OF THE SIGN

LATE next afternoon, while Don was reading in his room, a whistle sounded from the road. He lifted his eyes from the book and listened. Every now and then the call of the whistle rose and fell. After a while Barbara came upstairs.

"Ted Carter's whistling for you," she said.

Don nodded. "I know it." He pretended to read the book and turned a page. "I am not going out," he said.

"Good book, isn't it?" Barbara asked carelessly.

"Pretty good."

"Shall I tell Ted you won't be out?"

"No." Don looked up hastily. "He'll go away after a while."

Barbara went downstairs with a knowing smile. She parted the curtains at one of the parlor windows and peeped out. She didn't know what the game might be, but whatever it was, she was sure that Ted Carter had lost.

When Don approached the high school next day he found Ted waiting. The first-baseman gave him a wink as though some capital joke was known to them alone.

"Where were you yesterday afternoon?"

"Home," said Don. His heart began to beat faster.

"That's funny. I whistled for half an hour. Why didn't you come out?"

"Why," Don stammered, "I——"

"Beans!" said Ted. "You can't fool me. More boy scout stuff, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, what's the joke this time?"

"It's no joke," Don cried. "It's the scout law. A scout must stand for clean sport.

You've been talking about planting balls, and about sliding into players, and——"

"Yah!" cried Ted. "So that's it, eh? A clean little scout can't pal with a naughty boy like me. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"That—that's about it," said Don. He wondered if Ted would try to hit him.

But Ted did nothing of the kind. His face grew crimson with wrath.

"You can't give me any taffy like that," he cried. "I know you. You knocked the ball out of that third-baseman's hands. I saw you. And now because Mr. Wall throws some hot air about dirty playing you want to blame it on me. All right; you can cut away. But you put this right in your pipe. I'm going to get square."

"I'm not trying to blame you," said Don.

"Tell it to Sweeney," Ted mocked. "You're a little Lizzy—just like Alex Davidson. And you can't cut away from me, be-

cause I'm going to cut first. You're a little squirt."

Ted walked toward the school entrance. Don followed at a slower pace. Roberts, the captain of the nine, met him after the first period.

"Did you and Ted have a row?" he asked anxiously.

"We—we had a little spat," Don answered. He didn't feel that he could tell the captain what it was all about. Roberts, looking concerned, went off to tell Mr. Wall.

Don did not see the Latin teacher until classes were dismissed at noon. He didn't know how he was going to start to tell his story; and afterwards he never knew how he did tell it. All he remembered was that he found himself standing beside the teacher's desk, and Mr. Wall's hand was on his shoulder.

"That's the first time you ever did a trick like that, isn't it, Don?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's going to be the last, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," Don answered fervently. At no time had he mentioned Ted Carter; but Mr. Wall had sat on the bench, and he had heard from Roberts. He knew.

That afternoon Ted showed just what his future course would be. Up to that time he had worked his own position and had bothered nobody else. Now he suddenly took a violent fancy to Andy Ford. He stood beside the pitcher and tried to coach him, and kept telling him how good he was.

Andy's head did not become swelled. He grinned at the first-baseman.

"What are you trying to do," he asked, "kid me?"

"You're the sweetest little pitcher on the lot," Ted said earnestly.

"Not when Don's pitching," Andy laughed.

Ted became angry. "Don's a lucky pitcher," he growled

After the practice he tried to walk off with Andy alone; but Andy held back for Alex and Don and Roberts, and Ted went off by himself.

Next day he was at Andy's elbow again. But Andy accepted his attentions with a quiet smile and refused to become flustered.

Meanwhile, Chester Troop was busy. The scouts of the Wolf Patrol, working in Don's rear yard with now and then some help from Don's father, built a screened door for troop headquarters and screens for the windows. Scouts of another patrol planted flowers about the house—nasturtiums and pansies and poppies. There was a general feeling that the troop ought to paint the meeting house.

In fact, so fast and furious did the scouts plan things that Mr. Wall decided he needed help in handling the troop. Phil Morris graduated to the position of assistant scoutmaster, and Alex Davidson became leader of Wolf Patrol. Don, catching the spirit of ad-

vancement, cast longing eyes toward the time when he would be a first-class scout. There were six merit badges that he had made up his mind to get.

Meanwhile, business had picked up a bit for Mr. Strong. Don was sure that the sign on the lawn had helped. Privately Mr. Strong thought that this was just the usual spring rush, but he did not say a word that would spoil Don's enthusiasm.

"If we could put a smaller sign under that one," the boy said eagerly, "things would just hum."

"What kind of a sign?" his father asked.

"Let me make it first," Don pleaded, "and then see how it looks."

A day or two later he hung the smaller sign in place. It read:

SCREENS AND SCREEN DOORS

"You just watch the orders come in," he said confidently.

His father smiled. "Everybody knows I make screens, Don."

"They don't," said the boy. "Eight or nine persons stopped at troop headquarters and asked us where we got ours."

"Oh!" said Mr. Strong. "So that's it?" Next day he confided to Don that he had been asked to submit a price for making screens for three different houses.

Don's eyes danced. "That's all right, isn't it, Dad?"

"That's splendid," said his father. "You're a fine business man."

"I'm a better baseball pitcher," Don laughed. "We have a game tomorrow. I guess Mr. Wall will use Andy Ford."

Don's prediction proved to be correct. Mr. Wall sent Andy to the mound against Lackawanna High School. Andy wasn't any too sure of himself, and the first batter got to first base on four balls. Ted came out to the pitcher.

"These fellows are your meat," he said. "Take your time."

Andy walked the next boy.

"Here's where we start," cried Ted. "Come on, Andy."

The third batter slashed a grounder. Ted got it and threw to Leonard at third, and Leonard threw to Roberts at second for the completion of a double play.

"That's the stuff," Ted yelled. "They can't touch you, Andy."

The next Lackawanna boy hit a liner. Ted speared it with one hand. The side was out. Alex took off his mask and sat down beside Don.

"Ted surely saved Andy that time," he whispered.

Don nodded.

After that it seemed that Ted was saving Andy in every inning. Time after time the wobbly work of the pitcher had him in trouble; and time after time Ted soothed him, and

steadied him. The fielding of the first-baseman was faster than it had ever been before. He started two double plays, and twice he whacked the ball into Alex's big mit and cut off runs at the plate. Thanks to his work, the Chester nine squeezed through to a very narrow victory.

Don walked home, feeling vaguely uncomfortable. Would Ted work that way in back of him? He knew that he would pitch against Washington Academy. Washington was a mighty tough team to beat. Would Ted sail in and help him the way Andy had been helped?

However, the worry did not long remain. By bed-time Don had told himself that with Mr. Wall looking on Ted would have to play his hardest.

Next morning, Roberts, the captain, met Don near the high school.

"Mr. Wall won't be with us when we play Washington," he said, nervously. "He told

me after the game yesterday. There's a scoutmasters' meeting or something that day. Get out early every afternoon, won't you, Don? I want to have every fellow in shape."

Don promised. He walked on toward the school. His worry had returned. Mr. Wall would not be there. How would Ted back him up?

He bumped into the first-baseman at noon. Ted grinned, and announced loudly that Andy was as good a pitcher as the high school had ever had.

"You don't see them hitting Andy for eight runs," Ted proclaimed.

Don flushed. Bloomfield had got to him for eight runs. He felt like turning around and making some kind of retort; but Alex Davidson slipped an arm across his back and led him away.

"This Washington bunch can't hit a drop," said Alex.

Don brightened. "Who told you that?"

"I heard it from a fellow who has played against them. We'll see if we can't get your drop tuned up, eh?"

"You bet," said Don. On the way home to dinner he pointed out a spot where the troop could set out a bird house.

"We ought to call ourselves the Robin Patrol," Alex laughed. "We have six bird houses out, and five of them have robins already."

Don knew. He could not seem to get over the wonder of a bird living in a house that he had built.

That day, at practice, he worked steadily at his drop. Toward the end of the afternoon it was working beautifully. He did not go near Ted, and Ted did not bother him. Andy pitched without much effort, giving his arm a chance to rest after yesterday's struggle. Once, during a lull, he said hurriedly:

"Don't pay any attention to Ted, Don. He doesn't mean half what he says."

"I guess he means it when he says it about me," Don answered. He broke a beautiful drop down across the outside corner.

"Mackerel!" Andy sighed. "I wish I could do that."

Don smiled to himself. There wasn't a chance of Andy doing it, he thought, in a thousand years.

For the next three days Don practiced his drop zealously. Then, the morning of the Washington game, he suddenly awoke to the fact that his wrist was sore. He hurried through breakfast and went off to Alex's house. His whistle brought the catcher to the gate.

"Got your glove?" he asked.

"Inside," said Alex.

Don took off his coat. "Get it. Something's wrong with my wrist."

Alex brought out the glove. They ranged off the pitching distance. Don threw—an out first, then an in. His wrist did not complain.

He tried the drop. The wrist gave a kink of pain.

"That's it," he called.

Alex whistled. "The drop?"

Don nodded. "I guess it's all up with me," he said.

But when Captain Roberts heard, he bit his lips and scratched his head, and finally decided that Don without a drop was quite likely to be better than Andy.

As a result, when the game started that afternoon, Don was in the box. Ted kept up the babble of talk that usually comes from an infielder to a pitcher; but there was none of the fire and pepper to what he said that there had been while he had been encouraging Andy Ford. Don looked at him doubtfully.

It did not take the Academy boys long to start their attack on Don's pitching. A double, an out and an infield single brought a run in the first inning. Another double

came in the second, but did not damage. Then, in the third, three singles in a row brought in two more runs. The score was 3 to 0.

In the last half of this inning the Chester nine made its first assault. With three on the bases and two out, Alex Davidson tripled. The beginning of the fourth inning found the score changed to 3 to 3. Roberts walked out with Don.

"Hold them!" he charged. "We can get another run in an inning or two Hold them down and we'll win out for you."

Don nodded. He pitched to the boy at the plate, and the boy bunted, and Ted Carter fumbled the hit.

Don resumed his place on the mound. Ted had not looked at him. He pitched, and the batter popped to Leonard.

Roberts's voice rang out gleefully: "One down; that's the way, Don. Get this next fellow."

But the next fellow walked; and after that came a scratch single. Once more Washington had three men on bases.

Don discarded curves, and tried speed and a straight ball. The batter fouled two, and then struck out.

Roberts gave a cry of relief. "Now, this last one, Don."

Don went back to curves. The batter hit over the ball. The white sphere came bounding toward the box.

It was the easiest kind of a chance. The coachers had yelled "Two out; run on anything," and the Washington lads were racing around the bases. Don grinned. A lot of good it would do them to run on a hit like this.

The ball struck his glove. He took two or three steps toward where Ted waited on first base. He threw—and Ted dropped the throw.

A shout came from the coachers. The run-

ners put every ounce of strength into their strides. Ted scrambled for the ball with panicky haste.

"Home!" yelled Roberts.

Ted threw to Alex. But the third runner had slid safely across the plate.

Three more runs were in.

Don's blood grew hot. He held up his glove. Alex tossed him the ball. He caught it with an angry clutch; and when Alex signaled for a high out, he threw the ball over the catcher's head.

Roberts walked toward the mound. "That's enough, Don." He made a motion with his hand, and Andy Ford came out on the diamond.

With hanging head Don walked to the bench. Taken from the box. He glared out at Ted Carter. Ted had vowed to get square. Well, Ted had done it.

When the inning ended the score was 9 to 3 in Academy's favor. Ted came in to

the bench, and sat down, and said not a word. Don nudged Roberts.

"I'm going home."

"All right," said the captain. He looked crestfallen.

Don trudged away and did not glance at the bench. As he walked along the cries and the shouts of the game became fainter and fainter. But of this fact Don was unaware. He was completely absorbed in his own thoughts.

It had been the easiest kind of a chance. Why, Barbara could have caught that ball the way he had thrown it. And Ted had got it right in his mitt and had——

"He meant to drop it!" Don muttered passionately. "He saw I was in a hole with three on, and he dropped it so the runs would come in. Oh, wait until I tell Mr. Wall."

As a matter of ordinary principle Don had no use for the tale-bearer. Here, however, was something that struck him as being differ-

ent. Here was a fellow selling out. Here was a fellow throwing a game. Here was something that Mr. Wall, as a coach, should know.

"And I'll tell him first thing in the morning," Don vowed.

When he reached the house Barbara was setting the supper table. She looked up as he paused at the door.

"Who won, Don?"

"They did, I guess."

"Why, isn't the game over yet?"

Don shook his head. "I was taken out. Ted Carter dropped a ball and—— He did it on purpose, Barbara."

Barbara put down the knives and forks. "How do you know?"

"He's sore because I cut away from him."

"Why, did you quarrel, Don?"

"Because he—— Oh, I knocked a ball out of a fellow's hand. Mr. Wall said it was a dirty victory. Ted said he'd get square. To-

day he deliberately dropped a throw and three runs came in. I'm going to tell Mr. Wall tomorrow."

"Are you?" Barbara said thoughtfully.

Don went upstairs to his room. He was there but a few minutes when a knock sounded and Barbara came in. She sat down beside him and rested a hand on his shoulder.

"What about that dirty victory, and cutting away from Ted?" she said gently.

Don told her about the Bloomfield game, and about what Mr. Wall had said, and about the scene with Ted Carter. He explained how Ted had tried to take up with Andy Ford, and how Ted had worked for Andy against Lackawanna. Then he related what had happened that afternoon.

Barbara tapped one foot against the floor. "Are you sure it wasn't an accident, Don?"

"An accident!" Don grunted. "I guess not. He meant it."

"How do you know?"

"Why, the ball was right in his mitt."

"Isn't it the easiest chance that is missed the oftenest?"

"But he meant to drop this one, Barbara."

"How do you know?" Barbara persisted.

"Because he said he'd get square."

"Did he say he'd get square by throwing one of your games?"

"N—no."

"Then how do you know he meant to drop that ball?"

"I don't know it," Don said at last. "I think it."

"Ah!" said Barbara. She glanced toward the wall. She kept her eyes there for so long a time that Don turned to see what she was looking at. There was the sign: "A scout is Clean. He Keeps Clean in Body and Thought."

"Oh!" said Don.

Barbara stood up, and gave him a parting

pat, and left the room. "You had better wash for supper," she called from the doorway.

"All right," said Don.

But he did not leave his place. There were the words on the sign—clean thoughts. Was it clean for him to think that Ted had dropped the ball intentionally when he wasn't sure? Would it be clean to go to Mr. Wall on just a *thought* and charge that Ted had thrown a game? It was a tough thing to say about any fellow—that he had thrown down his school. Suppose Ted had made a real, honest, fair and square muff?

Don forgot his passionate anger. He began to think calmly about that miserable fourth inning. When Ted had dropped the ball, he had got a momentary glimpse of the first-baseman's face. How had Ted looked? Slyly satisfied?

Don, after a moment, shook his head. No. Ted had not looked like that. Ted had looked startled and flustered, just as any boy

would look who had missed an easy chance. And Ted had come in to the bench with a sober face, and had not said a word. Was that the way a fellow would act who had just got square?

Barbara's voice sounded from downstairs. "Supper! Supper, Don."

"Coming," he answered. He rose and approached the door. On the threshold he turned and looked for a moment again at the sign. As he came out into the hall full of the savory smell of supper he said to himself—almost aloud: "You're a great old law, sure enough. Every time I start wrong you sort of get in there and save me."

CHAPTER X

BAD NEWS

ALEX brought the news that evening that the final score was 14 to 5.

"If you hadn't hurt your wrist," he told Don, "we'd have had a chance. It was a regular slaughter. Thunder! but they could hit."

Don nodded. They surely could. However, he did not feel tonight that he wanted to discuss baseball. The talk soon turned to Chester Troop and to the doings of the Wolf Patrol.

"Going after your first-class badge?" Alex asked.

Don grinned. "You bet I am. And as soon as I get that far I'm going after merit badges."

"Good boy," said Alex. "I'm after merit badges myself."

That night Don checked off the things that a boy must do and know before he can become a first-class scout.

"I must make a round trip into the country," he thought, "seven miles and return, and I must write an account of the trip and the things observed. Then I must find a boy who wants to be a scout and teach him the tenderfoot requirements. As soon as I do that I'll tell Mr. Wall I am ready for my tests."

He put his Boy Scout Handbook away. His last thought before going to sleep was what boy he would train as a tenderfoot.

Don did not meet Ted Carter until the next baseball practice. Then the first-baseman kept watching him suspiciously. There was hostility in Ted's glance, and a dash of defiance, too.

"He expects me to complain to Mr. Wall,"

Don thought. After that he made an effort to keep out of the coach's way.

The practice was almost over when he heard his name called. Roberts and Mr. Wall were standing together. Don walked over wondering if they were going to question him about the game.

"Roberts says your wrist is sore," Mr. Wall said. "Let me see it."

Don held out his arm for inspection. There was no pain now.

"You let your drop alone for three or four weeks," the coach ordered.

Don's face became gloomy. "That's my best ball, sir."

"I know it. I'm sorry. You'll hurt yourself if you keep using it. Give that little muscle in there a chance to get well."

"Can I use my out and my in?"

"Oh, yes. You throw those with a different motion. See if you can't find something else."

"Yes, sir," said Don. He wondered how he was going to think of something new to pitch. He wasn't a Matty or a Walter Johnson.

He put in rather a gloomy evening. If he could use only an out or an in he was handicapped. Maybe Andy Ford would become the leading pitcher. Don didn't want that. The leadership, he felt, was his. He wanted all the glory.

Andy Ford pitched the Trenton game. Don didn't want to see Andy lose, but he did have a hope that Andy would just about pull through. He was not enthusiastic for Andy's success.

Today, just as he had done in the Lackawanna game, Ted worked desperately for the pitcher. Don tried to choke down a fresh feeling of resentment. It would serve everybody right, he thought, if Andy's curves were hammered all over the lot.

Andy's curves were hammered. But for all that Trenton scored very few runs. Andy

pitched a dogged, determined game. Inning after inning he worked himself out of the holes. By degrees the hostility left Don's eyes. At the end of the fifth inning the score was 3 to 3. Don began to lean forward anxiously. The grip of the game got him. He began to root. He wanted Chester to win.

And before he knew it, as the first half of the sixth inning was played he found himself rooting for Andy. He kept murmuring advice just as though the pitcher could hear him. Trenton had two on the bases, but she did not score. When Andy came in with Ted, Don slid along the bench to reach the pitcher.

"Not that way, Andy," he said nervously.

"Not what way?" Andy asked.

"Not in and high. Keep the ball low and out. I've been watching those batters."

Ted leaned across Andy's legs. "That's what I thought," he said to Don.

Don nodded. "I've been watching them."

Ted dug Andy in the ribs. "You hear that. Now get after them." He grinned at Don. "He's been getting out of the holes, hasn't he?"

"You bet he has," said Don.

After that Trenton's hitting became very thin. Chester won. All during the game, when the Chester boys were on the bench, Don sat on one side of Andy and advised him, and Ted sat on the other and encouraged. And Ted and Don spoke to each other as though there had never been a harsh word between them. Mr. Wall smiled quietly.

While Chester was in the field for the ninth inning, Don did some rapid thinking. He began to have the idea that he had acted foolishly. The scout law said he couldn't chum with a certain type of fellow, but it didn't say that he couldn't talk to that fellow. Instead of just dropping away from Ted in an inoffensive way, he had made Ted his enemy. He had tried to stand so straight

that he had leaned backwards. Surely it wasn't a good turn for a scout to arouse hard feelings.

When the game was over Don left the bench and began to walk away. Ted took a step or two after him, and then paused awkwardly. Don swung around and waited.

"I—I'll walk a way with you," said Ted.

"All right," said Don, and they went off together.

For a few minutes they walked along in silence, looking at the sky, at the front-yard gardens, at the ground—any place but at each other. Ted cleared his throat noisily.

"I thought you were going to tell Mr. Wall I meant to drop that ball," he said.

"I was going to," said Don.

Ted looked surprised. "Why didn't you?"

"Well, I wasn't sure whether you did or not. I thought you did. But I couldn't go to Mr. Wall just on a thought. And besides, it wasn't the right kind of thought."

"Why?" Ted asked.

"Because——" Don paused and flushed. "Oh, because the scout law is that a scout must have clean thoughts."

Ted gave a little whistle. "Gee! do you fellows live up to it like that? I guess Andy would make a good scout."

"Why?"

"He came to me and gave me blazes. He thought I dropped that ball purposely." Ted was silent a moment. "I—I didn't, Don. That was a clean error."

Don believed him. They parted with a degree of warmth.

Don walked the rest of the way shaking his head. Andy fighting for him! Suddenly he thought of what Ted had said—that Andy would make a good scout. It was necessary for him to train a boy in the tenderfoot requirements else he could not hope to be a first-class scout. Well, why couldn't he train Andy?

Before Don reached home he had arrived at still another conclusion—he'd coach Andy in pitching and make him sure of himself. The sturdy up-hill game that Andy had pitched that day seemed to make a great difference—that and the fact that Andy had fought for him.

It wasn't hard to interest Andy in scouting. Don loaned him the handbook and the latest issue of *Boys' Life* next morning. Andy was over at Don's house early, and declared that he wanted to join as soon as possible. So Don taught him the knots, and the history of the flag, and explained all about the Scout Laws, sign, salute and badges. Before the week was out Andy had taken his oath, and another member had been added to the Wolf Patrol.

Don had wondered how Andy would take baseball coaching. Andy accepted it gladly. Sometimes Ted came over. But now Andy did not repulse the first-baseman. Often the

three of them, with Alex, argued out some pitching problem. Slowly Andy began to show confidence—something he had lacked before.

Friday there was a wild downpour of rain. Next day the high school nine was scheduled to travel; but Friday afternoon Mr. Wall received word that the field was flooded.

Don was glad that the game could not be played. This would give him a Saturday to himself, a whole day in which to take the long hike that was necessary if he wanted his first-class badge.

Next morning he was out of bed an hour before his usual time. Barbara wanted to know if the nine was going to play a game before breakfast; but when Don told her about the hike, she packed him quite a lunch. Directly after breakfast he set forth on his journey. As befitted a scout on scout duty, he wore his khaki uniform. He had a compass in his pocket for use should he become lost, and he

carried a small pad for making notes of his trip.

The morning was fresh and clear when Don started on his long hike alone that Saturday. The rain had made the roads firm and springy. Don, rejoicing in the glory of the day, could not content himself with a mere swinging stride. Every now and then he broke into the scout pace—fifty steps running, fifty steps walking. And as he went along he made note of the roads he passed, and of their condition, and of the birds, and the trees and other growing things.

He had planned to follow the road that ran parallel with the river; but the woods were so cool and fragrant that he turned off, after three miles, and plunged into their depths. By and by he did not know exactly where he was, and he had a reckless feeling that he did not care. Toward midday he climbed far up into the tallest tree.

All the world, it seemed, was below him.

Far off the woods ended, and after that he could see the clear land of the valley. A long distance away were houses and the glint of sun on a church steeple. That, he knew, was Chester.

"Gee!" he said. "I must have come about nine miles." He began to scribble notes on his pad.

He had made a lot of noise climbing into the tree. Now, however, as he rested the woods were quiet again. Squirrels appeared, and birds—many of them of a kind he had never seen before. He wished he could stay there for hours and watch. Soon, though, his legs began to cramp, and he came down to the ground and ate his luncheon.

An hour later he started on the return journey. It was slow work finding his way out, and twice he was tempted to climb a tree and get his bearings. However, he stuck to his compass, and at last he found the road he had left that morning. The sun was getting close to

the western hills. Don squared his shoulders and trudged toward home. There was no scout pace now—he was content to walk.

That night a very tired boy sat down to supper. Afterwards, on the porch, he began to tell his father about the trip. Just how much he did tell he never knew, for presently his father was shaking his shoulder and laughing and saying: "Up to bed, Don. You're falling asleep."

And Don, not the smart-looking scout of the morning by any means, stumbled upstairs to his room.

Sore muscles were Don's portion next day. However, a warm bath and an alcohol rub brought him around, and Monday afternoon he was ready for his share of the baseball practice.

Alex Davidson came on the field excitedly.

"Wednesday's game with Bloomfield has been canceled," he announced. "Mr. Wall says we can't play a team that isn't fair."

"Those fellows surely did play dirty ball," said Leonard, the third-baseman.

Ted Carter looked disappointed. "Then there's no game until next Saturday," he said.

"Oh, yes, there is," cried Alex. "Mr. Wall has booked Washington for Wednesday. We'll go there for the game. Here's Don's chance to square accounts."

"Oh, Don wasn't 'right' when he faced Washington," Andy claimed quickly.

"I'd like to beat those fellows," said Don; and all afternoon he practiced that wicked in and that quick return throw.

"Are you going to use those?" Alex asked.

"Sure," said Don. "I guess they'll hold Washington for a while."

Wednesday found him throbbing with ambition. He had finished writing the account of his long hike. This afternoon he would go to Washington and pitch his hardest. He had a feeling that he was going to win. And as soon as the game was over he would tell Mr. Wall

that he was ready for his first-class tests. Then, ho! for the merit badges.

At one o'clock the nine met at the Transfer Station. They piled their suitcases behind the motorman. Then, bunched in the seats of the car, they began to plan for the game. Alex and Don bent their heads over a score-book and tried to determine what to pitch to Washington's batters.

"They seemed to be hitting everything last time," Alex said.

"I have a couple here they won't hit," said Don.

Alex looked troubled.

Chester, as the visiting team, went to bat first. By reason of a streak of consecutive hitting she scored two runs. Don walked out to the mound with Ted beside him. Ted was playing heart and soul today.

"We've started you with a two-run edge," the first-baseman encouraged. "Hold on to that, and we'll get you a couple more."

"Oh, I'll hold onto it," said Don. He pitched to the first batter, and the batter ducked his head and sprang away from the plate.

"What are you trying to do?" he demanded.

Don grinned, and worked the outside corner twice. Then, when the batter crowded the plate, he delivered his in-shoot again. The boy fell trying to get away from the plate. The next ball was straight over, but he was so badly rattled now that he let it go by for a called strike.

"One down!" cried Ted. "Pretty soft for you, Don."

Don grinned again. There were things beside drops that Washington could not hit.

The game ran along in this fashion for six innings. In the seventh, with the score 3 to 0, Washington braced and defied that in-shoot, and got three boys on the bases with two out. The team's heaviest batter strode to the plate.

The Washington rooters began to yell for a clean-up hit. Don shook his head. This chap had been to bat twice already, and had refused to be driven back. He was dangerous. So Don walked in for a conference with his catcher.

"I'm going to try my drop," he said.

"But you haven't thrown it in two weeks," Alex exclaimed.

"Can't help it," said Don. "This fellow's a bad actor. I'm going to use a slow wind-up, and if I get two strikes on him, look sharp."

"But——"

"I'll give him a drop for the first offering," said Don, and went back to the mound.

That first pitch was as beautiful a drop as he had ever thrown. The batter swung, and missed by a dozen inches.

"Yah!" cried Ted. "Get a shovel."

Don, winding up very, very slowly, tried the drop again. Once more it worked.

"Get two shovels," Ted yelled. "Give him another one, Don."

But Don was through with drops for the day. That second pitch had kinked his wrist.

Still winding up slowly, he wasted two. As the second wide one was thrown he set himself. Alex tossed him the ball. Instantly he shot it back on a line.

The batter was caught unprepared. He saw that this ball would be a strike and made a frantic stab with his bat.

"You're out!" said the umpire.

Alex stood for a moment behind the plate as though lost in thought. He rolled the ball out toward the pitcher's mound and began unbuckling his chest protector.

Don came to the bench wearing a wide grin. He sat next to Mr. Wall.

"That's what you call sneaking one over," he said.

"Sneaking?" Mr. Wall asked. "Is it necessary to sneak something?"

"Oh, that's only a way of putting it," Don laughed. "The batter must be on his guard. That's the rules."

Twenty minutes later the game was over. Chester had scored a shut-out.

"I guess that was getting back at Washington," Ted crowed.

Don looked pleased. While the others ran off for the dressing-room, he waited for Mr. Wall.

"I've taken my fourteen-mile hike," he said, "and I've written an account of the trip. I'd like to take my first-class tests, sir."

"I wouldn't if I were you," said Mr. Wall.

Don stopped short in surprise. "But I'm ready, sir."

"I'm sorry," said the Scoutmaster. He walked a few steps in silence and then spoke again. "I am afraid that I cannot recommend you for promotion," he said.

CHAPTER XI

THE CALL OF DUTY

DON did not ride home with the nine. He was too stunned and too miserable for companionship. When the players crowded aboard the trolley he slipped away unobserved and waited for the next car.

Why wouldn't Mr. Wall recommend him for his first-class scout badge? What had he done?

Supper was over when he reached home. Barbara had kept his food warm.

"Ted Carter passed here long ago," she said.

"I didn't come on that trolley."

"Did you win?"

"Oh, yes," said Don.

Wise little Barbara sat on the other side of the table and waited. Don kept looking down

at his plate. Presently he blurted the news that Mr. Wall would not recommend him for promotion.

Barbara gave a little cry of distress. "Why not?"

Don shook his head. "I don't know. He just said he wouldn't."

"Aren't there certain things a boy must do to become a first-class scout?"

"Yes."

Barbara smiled hopefully. "Well, we'll look those things up and see where you fall short. Brace up, Don."

But Don ate his supper gloomily. Mr. Wall wouldn't turn a fellow down, he thought, without a very good reason

Later he and Barbara sat together and studied the Handbook.

"Now," said Barbara, "let's see where we're at. To become a first-class scout a second-class scout must be able to swim fifty yards."

"Fifty yards is easy," said Don.

"Earn and deposit at least two dollars in a public bank."

"I have over three dollars in the bank," Don said. "And I can send and receive messages about twenty letters a minute, and I've taken my hike, and I've instructed a tenderfoot scout. I've covered all that."

Barbara nodded. "All right. Now, how about first aid——"

"I can do all that, and I can do the cooking stunts. I've read maps and I've drawn maps. Dad has shown me how to use an ax and a hatchet. I've judged distance and things many times—we've had troop contests. I tell you, Barbara, I've done all those things."

Barbara read patiently from the Handbook. "Describe fully from observation ten species of trees or plants, including poison ivy, by their bark, leaves——"

Don gave a scornful laugh. "There isn't a fellow in our troop can't do that."

Barbara read again: "Furnish satisfactory

evidence that he has put into practice in his daily life the principles of the scout law and oath. How about that, Don?" She looked up.

This time Don did not answer so readily. After a while his shoulders shook in a sigh.

"Maybe that's it," he said.

"Oh!" cried Barbara. "Haven't you been living up to the scout law and the oath?"

"I think so," said Don. "But Mr. Wall has been talking about my in-curve and my quick throw and—— He's wrong, Barbara, if that's his reason."

Barbara closed the book. "What about that in and that quick throw?" she asked. Her eyes were puckered thoughtfully.

And just as though he were talking to a boy, Don told her how he had to give up his drop, and of how he had cultivated that wicked in-shoot and that quick return.

"It's fair," he argued. "Lots of pitchers do it. I've read of big league pitchers who

used a high, fast in to get the batter away. Of course, there's a chance of the batter getting hit. I never pitch any higher than a fellow's chest. And if I hit him that means a runner on the bases. The batter isn't the only one who's taking a chance. The pitcher's taking a chance, too; but Mr. Wall thinks only of the batter."

Barbara sighed. "I don't know enough about baseball to advise you, Don."

"I don't want any advice," Don cried stubbornly. "I know I'm right. Mr. Wall is against my quick return because I called it 'sneaking one over.' He forgets that you have to throw so quickly that you're taking all kinds of chances of pitching a ball instead of a strike. If that's his reason for telling me——"

"How big is that 'if'?" Barbara interrupted.

Don shook his head. "I don't know," he said hopelessly. "What would you do, Barbara?"

But Barbara told him again that she did not know.

When he went upstairs to his room he stood in front of the scout law once more. It had become a habit for him to go up there and read it whenever he was in trouble. He read it again. "A scout is clean. He keeps clean in body and thought, stands for clean sport, clean ____"

"That's it," Don said bitterly. "Clean sport. Mr. Wall's holding me up on that. He's doing just what I did when I had my row with Ted—he's piling it on too thick. I play a clean game. I never tried to hit a fellow. I'm not going to change my pitching."

After classes next day he went off to the practice and wondered if Mr Wall would be any different to him. The coach treated him just the same. Don wanted to rest his arm. He threw a few balls to Alex, and then began to coach Andy Ford.

"I'm glad you're standing by me," Andy said.

"Shucks!" said Don. "All you need is to get the feeling that they can't beat you."

Andy must have acquired that notion within the next few days, for on Saturday he beat Mapleridge School easily. It was the best game he had yet pitched.

"You're coming, Andy," cried Ted.

"You mean Don is making me go," said Andy. He glanced at the coach. "Don is giving me a lot of help, Mr. Wall."

"I know it," the coach said quietly.

Don flushed. But even in the midst of his boyish embarrassment, in the face of praise, he couldn't help wondering how Mr. Wall could one minute give him credit for helping Andy and the next minute find fault with him for pitching an in-shoot that never was intended to hit a fellow.

"Maybe he thinks I don't care whether or not I hit the batters," Don muttered. Sud-

denly he brightened. Why, it would be easy to show Mr. Wall that this was not so. He'd do it in the very next game he pitched. Then maybe Mr. Wall would recommend him, and everything would be all right.

When Don reached home his father and his mother and Barbara sat on the porch. His father waved a letter.

"Business conference. Sit down, Don."

Don found a chair. He looked inquiringly at the three faces. Barbara smiled.

"You come into this conference as the advertising expert," she said.

"You are making fun of me," Don protested.

"I'm not," said Barbara. "Tell him, dad."

Mr. Strong opened the letter. "It seems," he said gravely, "that the making of window screens and screen doors is a business that has been sadly neglected in these parts. People from Irontown have been driving over this road and have seen my sign——"

"Oh!" said Don.

"Didn't I tell you?" Barbara cried triumphantly.

"They have seen my sign," Mr. Strong resumed, "and they have asked a hardware dealer in Irontown for screens and he didn't have them. I guess they asked him because my sign—Don's sign, rather—put them in mind of it."

"Mr. Wall said you never can tell how far advertising will carry," Don said in a tone of wonder.

"Mr. Wall is right," said his father. "But to resume. This hardware dealer at Irontown is a merchant. He buys and sells. He doesn't make things. So he has written to me asking my prices for screens and what commission I will allow him on orders. He thinks he can take many orders if I will send him sample screens."

"Bully!" cried Don.

His father laughed. "There's the advertis-

ing man talking. He thinks only about getting business; he doesn't think about how the business is to be handled."

Don's face fell. "Can't you handle it, dad?"

"I'm afraid not. I can't handle the extra work alone, and there wouldn't be enough profit to justify me in hiring help."

"That's as far as the conference got," said Barbara.

"That's far enough," Don replied dubiously.

"The question is," said Mr. Strong, "what shall I do?"

Don shook his head. He didn't know. Mrs. Strong sighed.

"If it was something about housework, I might know," she said.

"And if it was something about keeping us well fed and contented you'd know, too, wouldn't you, mother?" Barbara asked. She looked at her father. "My idea,"

she added seriously, "would be to hold back a while."

"If I cannot accept today," said Mr. Strong, "I cannot accept tomorrow."

"Nobody ever knows anything about tomorrow," Barbara said wisely. "Let's all think it over for a couple of days. Something may turn up."

Mr. Strong smiled and put the letter in his pocket. "Hopeful little Barbara, aren't you?"

"It doesn't cost anything to hope," Barbara said brightly.

Don carried that thought with him to bed. It cost nothing to hope. Well, he'd hope that Mr. Wall would recommend him after he pitched his next game.

Alas for Don's hopes, it was to be a long time before he again stepped out to the mound for the Chester team. But he didn't know that then.

Monday, when he came home from the

baseball practice, Beth was sitting on the porch.

"Hello!" he said in surprise. "Did they give you a holiday?"

Beth made a wry face. "A long holiday, I guess. The bakery has closed."

"Failed?"

Beth nodded. "A man came this afternoon and tacked a notice on the door and shut everything up. Do you know of any store in the village that needs a girl clerk?"

Don said he did not. He went up to his room. Beth out of a job meant three dollars less a week coming into the family.

"Maybe it's a good thing that dad didn't say no to that man in Irontown," he muttered. Maybe his father would be able to find a way to make extra screens. If there was only some way he could help——

He walked to the window and stood there looking down at the yard. There was a way that he could help. But it meant a sacrifice.

"Anyhow," he said aloud, "the nine needs me. Andy couldn't do all the pitching. And I must show Mr. Wall that I don't mean to hit the batters."

This reasoning seemed to settle the matter. When Barbara called he went down to supper whistling a merry tune.

However, he wasn't at the table long before he began to feel uncomfortable. His mother was unusually silent, and his father was grave. Barbara had little spells when she became thoughtful and forgot to eat. The loss of Beth's three dollars suddenly began to loom before Don's eyes as a staggering misfortune.

"But I must stick to the nine," he muttered. "When I quit the football team Mr. Wall made me see that a scout must be helpful——"

"You're talking to yourself, Don," said Barbara.

He glanced up in confusion. "I was thinking."

"About what?"

"About—about scouts," he said hesitatingly.

After supper he returned to his room. The problem that he had thought was settled had come back to harass him again.

The sign on the wall seemed to offer no solution. He picked up his Handbook. Maybe he would find something there. He turned the well-thumbed pages until he came to the scout laws. He read the third:

"A scout is helpful. He must be prepared at any time to save life, help injured persons, and share the home duties. He must do at least one good turn for somebody every day."

There it was in black and white. Nothing about standing by the nine, or showing Mr. Wall, or getting his first-class badge—but a little about sharing the home duties. And what was the chief home duty? Why, seeing that the home was supported, of course.

He closed the book and stared down at the floor. The games with Irontown High School, the big series of the year, were approaching.

He had figured on pitching two of those games —and at Irontown the visiting team was always met at the station by a tally-ho and ridden to the playing field in triumph. He had looked forward to that ride ever since the first day of practice. But the scout law didn't say a word about rides in tally-hos or about big games.

"Gee!" Don said huskily. "It's hard to be a good scout."

He sat there until the room was black with the shadows of night. He heard Beth's footsteps go along the hall. He sighed, and stood up, and moved toward the door.

Downstairs in the dining-room his father and his mother and Barbara were talking in low voices. When he walked in on them the discussion stopped.

"I thought you had gone out," said Barbara.

"I was upstairs," said Don.

"What doing?"

"Thinking."

Barbara looked quickly at her father.

"Thinking of what, Don?" he asked.

"About that man from Irontown. Did you write to him yet, dad?"

"Not yet."

"Then you can write to him in the morning and tell him you'll send samples."

Barbara smiled.

"Why should I tell him that?" his father asked.

Don cleared his throat. "Because I'm going to help you afternoons. Beth's job—you know what I mean. We've got to make up that money some way. I've thought it all out. You make the screen framework, and in the afternoons I'll tack on the wire and the molding, and I'll paint them. I guess we'll be able to take care of all the orders that come along."

His father was so long in answering that Don said quickly:

"I wouldn't slop the work, dad."

"That isn't what's bothering me," his father said slowly. "I'm wondering if it will be fair to let you make this sacrifice."

"Oh, it isn't a sacrifice," Don cried.

"No?" Mr. Strong looked astonished. "What is it, then?"

"It's being helpful and sharing the family duties," said Don.

His father said "A-h-h!" very loudly, and stared up at the ceiling and blinked his eyes. His mother laid her hand on his arm. Barbara leaned across the table.

"Aren't you forgetting the school nine?" she asked gently.

"No," said Don. He thought about showing Mr. Wall, and his first-class badge, and the trip to Irontown and the ride in the tally-ho, and he tried to keep his voice steady. "I—I'm giving up baseball."

CHAPTER XII

QUICK SPEECH

NEXT day Don told Mr. Wall that he was going to quit the nine. He had an idea that the coach might be displeased; but after he had explained his reasons Mr. Wall gave him the friendliest of smiles.

"That's a fine thing to do, Don," he said. "Are you going to work every afternoon, do you think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Saturday afternoons, too?"

"No, sir! I forgot about Saturday. I will help my father each Saturday until noon."

"So!" The coach puckered his eyes thoughtfully. "What's to stop you from pitching our Saturday at-home games?"

"Oh!" cried Don, "I never thought of that.

How many Saturday at-home games are there?"

Mr. Wall brought out the schedule. They studied it. Don's face clouded with disappointment.

"There's only one Saturday at-home game," he said, "and that's Saturday week."

Mr. Wall nodded. "We played a lot of at-home games when we started, and now we're doing our traveling. The first Irontown game is a Saturday game, but that's played at Irontown."

"And the second game is here the following Wednesday," said Don, with his eyes on the schedule.

"And if each team has won one and lost one, the deciding game will be played the Saturday after that. You may get a chance then, Don."

"Not if they won the toss," Don said gloomily. "They'd pick Irontown as the place to play the deciding game. And anyway, if they

won two straight or if we won two straight there wouldn't be any third game."

Mr. Wall laughed. "You don't look like a very cheerful scout," he said. "Buck up! Something may happen that will give you a chance to pitch half a dozen games. You never can tell."

"I guess not," Don said. "Anyway, if I can't pitch, I'll get Andy in the best shape possible. That will be next door to pitching the games myself, won't it?"

"Now you're talking like a real scout," said Mr. Wall. Afterwards the boy remembered that the coach hadn't said a word about the nine. All his concern had seemed to be for the player who was compelled to give up the game.

Don didn't attend the practice that day. If he was going to help his father, the best thing to do was to pile in and get started. So throughout the late afternoon he helped on jobs that were waiting to be finished. After

supper Andy Ford and Alex Davidson appeared outside the front gate.

"Bring them in on the porch," said Barbara. She had never suggested that Ted Carter be invited to the porch.

Don led them through the front yard. The three boys sat on the porch steps.

"Mackerel!" Andy cried, in dismay. "Are you through for the season, Don?"

"Almost," said Don. "I may pitch the game against Englishtown School, two weeks from Saturday."

"And you're not coming to the field for practice?" Alex demanded.

Don shook his head. "Can't. I must help dad."

"Who's going to coach me in my pitching?" Andy wailed.

"I am," said Don.

Andy jumped up.

"How? Where?"

"Right here. From six to seven o'clock each

"'There's only one Saturday at-home game,' he said."

night. I'll get my practice, too. You fellows can make that, can't you?"

"I can," said Alex.

"I'd come out at midnight and use pine torches," Andy cried happily. His voice changed. "I'm sorry you're out, Don. The team would be a whole lot better off if you were with them."

"Rats!" said Don. "You won't lose a game." After his visitors had gone he stared out at the road. Gee! Weren't Alex and Andy rousing good scouts? He was glad that they all belonged to the Wolf Patrol.

Next day the sample screens were sent to the Irontown merchant. Three days later the first order arrived—nine window screens and one screen door. Don was as happy as though he had achieved a personal triumph.

"We've got to make a good job of these, dad," he said. "This is the first lot."

"We must make a good job of every lot," said his father.

The work ran along. More orders came. Soon Mr. Strong, as he put it, was "up to his neck and swimming hard." Don acquired a speedy knack of doing his end of the job. The Irontown merchant wrote that his customers were well pleased with the goods.

"Isn't that great?" Don breathed. "You're getting a reputation, dad."

"We're getting a reputation," his father smiled.

Meanwhile, the baseball work ran on. Andy pitched three games and won them all, though it was only heavy slugging by the Chester nine that saved him in the third game. After that struggle Don tried to teach him that slashing in-shoot and that quick return. But Andy shook his head.

"I don't think I'll bother with those, Don."

"Why not?" Don demanded.

"Oh—— What's the use?"

"But why won't you bother with them?"

"Because I don't like them," Andy said

frankly. "Tell me how I break this drop, Don."

Don watched sullenly. He was angry. He didn't like this way Andy had of criticizing his pitching. However, his admiration for the improvement in Andy's work was so great that he stuck to his job as pitching coach. He was rapidly developing Andy into a school star.

Then came the approach of the game with Englishtown—the game Don was to pitch. Here was where he showed Mr. Wall that he didn't try to hit the batters. But at two o'clock that Saturday afternoon, while Don was warming up with Alex, storm clouds appeared in the east. Fifteen minutes later rain was falling and the game was off. Don ran for home and sat sadly on the porch. There Barbara found him.

"I'm sorry you missed your game, Don," she said.

"It isn't that," he said miserably. "I was going to show Mr. Wall I don't try to hit the

batters, so that he'd recommend me for my first-class badge, and now I won't get another chance all season."

"Are you sure, Don, that that's the reason Mr. Wall won't recommend you—because of your pitching?"

"It must be that," Don answered. "Mr. Wall never tells a scout he mustn't do this or that. He lets us figure things out for ourselves."

Barbara was silent a moment. "When's the first Irontown game?" she asked.

"Next Saturday."

"I'm going to ask dad to let you off so you can pitch that game," said Barbara. She jumped up and caught his head, and bent it back and looked down at him. "I'm proud of you, big brother," she said.

"And I'm proud of you, little sister," he answered.

They both laughed.

But Don did not pitch the opening Iron-

town game. Friday morning came a rush order—the biggest order Mr. Strong had yet received.

"I'll have to work all day tomorrow," he said. "You go off to your game, Don. You're entitled to a holiday."

Don sighed and shook his head. It wasn't as hard to say no now as it had been the first time.

"If this order is big enough to keep you working all day Saturday," he said, "it's big enough to keep me on the job, too."

"I won't let you work Saturday afternoon," his father said. "Our agreement gives you Saturday afternoon off."

"But if I want to help you, dad——"

"You go over to Irontown," said his father, "and see the game. You'll get there for the closing innings, anyway."

The team had heard a rumor that Don might pitch against Irontown. Friday evening Ted Carter came around.

"How about it, Don?" he asked. "Coming with us?"

"Can't," said Don. "A big order came in this morning. I'm going to stay here and help."

Ted kicked his toe against a clump of grass. "You quit at noon tomorrow, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Wall has ordered us to get the twelve-thirty car at the Transfer Station. It's an hour's ride to Irontown."

"I couldn't make that car," said Don. "I'd have to wash, and eat dinner, and then walk to the station."

Ted kicked at the grass again. "Suppose I come around tomorrow morning and help you with your work? That would make two of us working. Couldn't you quit at eleven o'clock then?"

"Do you know how to cut wire, and tack it on, and set molding, and paint screening?" Don asked eagerly.

"I could learn," said Ted hopefully. "Couldn't you show me tonight?"

Don gave up his last hope. His father's business was too important to trust to green hands.

"You couldn't learn it in an hour, Ted," he explained. "It's fine of you to want to help. I wish you could. I—I'd like to pitch that game."

Ted nodded. "I guess I know how you feel. You'll come over, won't you, and sit beside Andy and sort of keep him up? He's pretty nervous."

"I'll be there," said Don. He went into the house.

"What did Ted want?" Barbara asked.

He told her. She looked thoughtful. "Maybe you ought to ask Ted around some evening," she said.

Don gave a gasp. "I thought you didn't like him, Barbara."

"Don't be a goose," said his sister; but she

squeezed his arm in a way that showed that she was not scolding.

At noon next day Don quit work and hurried upstairs. Barbara had laid out clean linen on his bed. He bolted for the bathroom, splashed into a tub and then splashed out. After a while he came downstairs clean and cool.

"What car do you want to catch?" Barbara asked.

"One o'clock," said Don.

"It's twenty-five minutes to one now. I don't think you can make it."

Don sighed. "Maybe if I went right off now——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Barbara. "You'll eat your dinner."

"All right; I'll get the half-past one car. Isn't that beef stew I smell, Barbara?"

"Beef stew," Barbara answered, and Don took his place at the table with less regret.

The half-past one car was waiting when he

reached the Transfer Station. It was an hour's ride to Irontown. After that it was a fifteen minutes' walk to the field. He'd get there at about a quarter to three—and the game was scheduled to start at two o'clock.

"Does this car ever get to Irontown in less than an hour?" he asked the conductor.

The conductor shook his head. "One hour is our running time, but we won't make it today."

"Why not?" the boy asked.

"The road is torn up about five miles from here. That holds us up each trip."

"How—how long?"

"Oh, about fifteen minutes." The conductor pulled the bell-rope twice, and the car moved away from the station. Don went inside and sat down. He wouldn't get to the field until after three o'clock.

He had a feeling that if he were the motorman he'd make that car go a whole lot faster. Every time the car stopped he fretted until

it started; and when the stretch of torn road was reached he almost had a fit. The way the road was choked with men and teams it didn't seem as though they would ever get past.

But presently the men and the teams got off to one side and the car went ahead. Don wanted to look at his watch, but did not dare. They were playing the game by now. He wondered if Andy was being hit.

At last they came to Irontown. Don jumped from the car and ran up the main street. Soon he turned into a side thoroughfare. He heard a faint cheer.

He ran faster. The houses became fewer. He saw a fielder, and then another, and then the infield, and the catcher and the boy at the plate. The pitcher threw the ball. Don recognized the motion.

"That's Andy," he told himself. The batter swung and missed. Don wondered if that was the first or the second strike. But Alex

took off his glove and mask and the team began to run in.

"Gee!" said Don. "It's three out!"

He reached the bench before the Irontown nine had taken the field. Ted called a happy greeting. Mr. Wall nodded and smiled. Don sat down next to Andy.

"I'm glad you're here," said the pitcher. "I feel better now."

Don wanted details, not compliments. "What inning is it?" he asked.

"Last of the sixth."

"Who's ahead?"

"They are."

"What's the score?"

"Four to three."

Don brightened. "That isn't so bad. We'll get another run off this pitcher."

But by the time the first half of the seventh was over he had his doubts. The Irontown pitcher had speed, and control, and a snappy curve ball.

"How did we get our three runs off him?" he asked Ted.

"We didn't get them off him," said Ted; "we knocked the first fellow out."

"Oh!" said Don. He slid over to Mr. Wall and glanced down at the score book.

Chester had made her three runs in the first inning. Irontown had been picking up hers one at a time. If they continued to get to Andy——

But Andy blanked them in the seventh. Chester came in for her eighth inning.

Don slid back and forth along the bench. He begged and implored a hit. He held his breath whenever the ball was hit, and did not breathe again until the runner was safe or out. When the half ended, and Chester had not scored, he found that he was sweating.

"Make them hit, Andy," he advised.

Andy put the ball over. Three flies sailed away to the outfielders. Then Chester came

in for its ninth inning. This time, if the nine didn't score, the game was over.

Andy Ford was first up. He hadn't made anything all day that looked like even the forty-second cousin of a hit. Perhaps, for that reason, the Irontown pitcher held him cheaply. Anyway, he pitched with an easy air of confidence—and Andy slashed the ball into left field for two bases.

The Chester bench gave a jump and a shout. Don's cap fell to the ground and lay there unheeded.

"Another little hit like that, Lane," he begged.

But Lane, obedient to a signal from the coachers, bunted. The third-baseman fumbled. Lane was safe on first and Andy was safe on third.

"Oh!" cried Don. "Here's where we sew it up."

Roberts fouled out. The captain came back to the bench looking sick.

"I'm a fine man in a pinch," he blurted. "See what you can do, Grunow."

Grunow gave the first pitch a furious clout. Don gave a yell of delight. A moment later his joy was gone. The ball had gone foul by a foot.

"Isn't that hard luck?" he breathed. He slid along the bench to Mr. Wall. The coach said nothing, but his eyes were alive with fire. He looked as though he would have liked to go out there on the coaching lines and take charge.

Grunow came back to the plate. He tapped weakly to the pitcher, and was thrown out. But Lane had scooted safely to second, and Andy had not dared to try to score.

It was Ted Carter's turn to hit—Ted, the best batter on the team. He strolled out to the plate as though going to bat in a pinch like this was an everyday affair. The pitcher and the catcher held a conference.

"Lace it, Ted," Don called. He turned to

Mr. Wall. "He has that pitcher worried already."

And in truth, when the pitcher faced the plate he had all the earmarks of worry. He kept shifting his position, and shaking his head, and looking around at the infield.

"Play ball!" yelled a group of Chester students who had come over to see the game.

The pitcher delivered the ball. Ted fouled.

"Strike one!" cried the umpire.

Again the pitcher shifted his position, and glanced around nervously. The third-baseman ran in and talked to him. He faced the plate again.

"Right here," cried the catcher.

"Lace it, Ted!" cried Don.

Ted swung and missed.

"Strike two!" the umpire called.

Don leaned out from the bench. "It only takes one to hit it, Ted."

For all that he had two strikes on the batter, the pitcher was looking just as nervous as

when he had first started to pitch to Ted. He retreated to the pitching mound. The catcher tossed him the ball—and instantly he streaked it back toward the plate.

Ted, the heavy-hitting Ted, was caught unprepared. The ball skipped past him before he could move his bat.

"You're out!" cried the umpire. Chester had lost. Ted, the mighty Ted, had been tricked.

"Yaaaa——aaah!" shrilled the Irontown pitcher. "I fooled you that time." He wasn't a bit nervous now.

Don sprang to his feet. "That wasn't fair," he cried hotly. "Ted wasn't expecting anything like that——"

And then, of a sudden, he thought of what he was saying. He used that quick return himself; he had even tried to teach it to Andy Ford. He stole a quick glance at Mr. Wall.

The coach was calmly marking the scorebook. For all that, Don was sure that the

man must have heard. He turned away from the bench, not with Alex and McMaster and the others, but alone; and as he trudged across the field his face was flushed with humiliation and shame. There was no question now as to why Mr. Wall had refused to recommend him for his first-class badge.

CHAPTER XIII

DEFEAT AND VICTORY

THE ride out to the game had been long. The ride back was short—not nearly long enough to give Don time to straighten out his thoughts.

He began to see the things that Mr. Wall stood for. Clean, open sport, the matching of skill against skill—not scheming, and conniving, and fishing for mean advantages. Frightening batters and tricking them wasn't skill, no more than knocking the ball out of a baseman's hands. And the scout law read—*clean sport.*

"It's a wonder Mr. Wall didn't put me out of the troop," Don muttered.

That night he carried his troubles to Barbara.

"What are you going to do," she asked, "tell Mr. Wall you won't pitch that way again?"

"Telling him won't do any good," said Don. "I've got to show him."

"Suppose Chester loses the next game?"

"Then I won't get a chance to show him," Don said gloomily.

However, he was resolved that if Irontown won the next game it wouldn't be because he hadn't done his best for Andy Ford.

He feared that Andy would be cast down because of the defeat. Instead, the pitcher seemed to have no dread of the next game.

"This Irontown bunch had me frightened," he confessed to Don. "They've been slugging pitchers all season. Well, if I could hold them to four runs when I was nervous, I'll hold them to less runs next time. They're only schoolboy players like the rest of us."

"That's all," said Don. "Come around tonight."

"You bet I will," said Andy.

The whole school buzzed with talk of the way Irontown had won the game. But Don noticed that neither Andy nor Alex discussed this incident of play when he was around.

"They must think I'm a fine skate," he told himself, "using that same delivery."

That afternoon he and his father finished the rush order. Things slowed down in the carpenter shop to a more normal routine. In the evening, when Andy and Alex came around, Don was ready.

"Here goes for the drop," he said. "I guess my wrist is all right now."

Alex grinned. "Getting ready for a shot at Irontown?"

"He'll get it," Andy said, "if I'm able to pitch the game I want to pitch next Wednesday."

Don gave himself a stiff half-hour of pitching. At the end of that time he and Alex sat down to talk things over.

"How's the wrist?" the catcher asked. "Does it pain you?"

"Not a bit."

"Good! Same old drop, Don."

Don looked pleased. After a while Alex said carelessly:

"You didn't try that in-shoot once, nor that quick return."

"I guess I was too busy working the drop," Don answered.

Alex glanced at him. "It's a fine drop," he said.

Next evening Alex and Andy came around again, and once more Don worked for a half-hour. To-night, it seemed, he again forgot his in-shoot and his quick return. Alex walked home smiling quietly.

Andy remained behind for a word with Don.

"I know how you feel," he said earnestly. "You want a shot at them. Well, when I go in tomorrow I'll be pitching for Chester and

I'll be pitching for you, and if I can get away with it, you'll take a crack at them next Saturday."

Don squeezed his arm. "Soak it to them, Andy," he begged.

Another rush order had come from Irontown. Next afternoon, when classes were dismissed, Don hurried home. Barbara met him at the gate.

"Give me your books," she said, "and go to the game."

Don hesitated a moment. "No," he said; "I'll stick to the job. I wouldn't quit to pitch, and quitting to watch the game would be about the same thing. I promised to help dad every afternoon. I'll stick to my bargain."

"But——" Barbara began.

Don pushed past her. "It isn't hard to stay on the job—now that I've done it once or twice. Anyway, Mr. Wall says a good scout doesn't go around picking out the soft spots."

"Then I guess you're a good scout," Barbara said.

Don shook his head. "Alex Davidson and Andy Ford are the good scouts. You never see them in trouble with Mr. Wall." He left his books on his bureau and slipped into a pair of overalls. When he came down to the carpenter shop, there were many frames finished. He got out the paint pots and began to cut wire.

"I thought you would go to the game today," his father said in surprise.

"Ah! Barbara's trying to baby me," said Don. He tacked on the first piece of screening and began to whistle lustily.

But after a while the whistle died. The ball field wasn't so very far away, and he could hear faint cries and shouts. He knew that this represented the practice. After a while the sound ceased.

"I guess they've started," he told himself.

For a while there was no noise from the

field. Then a sudden cheer broke the quiet. His father looked at him.

"Who's that—Chester?"

"Irontown," said Don. What had happened? Were they hammering Andy hard?

The cheering continued for quite a while, and then died down. During the next half-hour there were a few feeble outbursts, but none of them was strong enough to be recognized as the cries of either school. And then, after a long time, came more cheers—prolonged and triumphant.

"Irontown again," said Don. He glanced at the clock in dread. However, the time convinced him that the game could not be over. It must be about the sixth inning.

He had finished tacking the screening and the molding. Now he began to paint. The minutes passed. He finished three screens, and was working on the fourth when a yell came strongly to his ears. He dropped the brush.

"That's Chester," he cried excitedly. "I bet she's doing things."

The yell grew and became louder and deeper. A minute later it became wild. Then abruptly it stopped.

"Somebody's out," said Don.

The noise broke out again, and slowly was hushed.

"Another out," said Don. He forgot to paint, and stood there with the brush held idly in his hands.

"Maybe the game is over," said his father.

"If it is, we've lost," said Don. He shook himself, and came out of his dream, and began to paint.

"What's that?" cried his father.

Ah! there could be no mistaking what that was—the Chester yell again. But now it was a wild, joyous, crazy sort of yell. And it did not die down. It kept on rising and falling, rising and falling, and never for an instant losing its note of joy.

Barbara came to the head of the stairs. 'Isn't that Chester, Don?"

"You bet it is," cried Don.

Now the noise began to die away. But it did not shut up as it would have had something gone wrong. It just sort of yelled itself out as though the cheerers were tired.

"Gee!" said Don. "Something great must have happened."

There was a patter of feet out in the road. The garden gate clicked. Don ran to the shop door. Ted Carter came running in all out of breath, but unmistakably happy.

"We won," he gasped.

Barbara gave a cheer from the stairhead. Mr. Strong hammered a block of wood against his bench. Don gave a squeak and slapped the paint brush into the pot.

"How did it happen, Ted?"

"A ninth inning rally, only this time that quick return didn't work. Alex was at the bat just waiting for such a move, and when

their pitcher tried to work it, Alex slammed the ball on the nose. I guess they haven't found it yet."

"Home run?" Don demanded.

"Biggest home run I ever saw," said Ted. "They had us licked up to that time. The score was 2-0 when we went to bat in the ninth. McMaster and Burns were on when Alex hit that one, and zingo! away went their old ball game."

"Andy must be happy," Don giggled.

"Happy? Say," said Ted, "that kid won't sleep for a week. He's telling everybody what Don Strong will do to them next Saturday."

Don became serious. "Where will the game be played?"

"Here—right in little old Chester. I forgot that. Roberts won the toss for the grounds. There won't be anything to stop you pitching next Saturday, will there?"

"There certainly will not," said Barbara. She came down to the shop with lemonade.

Ted accepted a glass bashfully. Afterwards he confided to Don that maybe Barbara didn't have anything against him.

"Barbara!" said Don. "Shucks! She told me I ought to bring you up to my room some night. Barbara's a good sport."

"I guess she is," said Ted.

Next day Don and Andy met and had a celebration all of their own.

"I could have cried when they got their second run," Andy said. "I thought to myself, 'There goes Don's chance.' When Alex hit that homer I guess I did a song and dance."

"Mr. Wall never gets excited," said Don.

"Doesn't he?" Andy laughed. "Mr. Wall jumped off the bench with the rest of us."

That afternoon Don met the coach.

"Will you be able to pitch Saturday?" Mr. Wall asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Keep up your work with Alex. It's been fine of you to take Andy in hand."

"Andy would have done as much for me," said Don.

That evening he worked with Alex until darkness made it impossible to continue.

"You're fit," said the catcher. "Just a little tomorrow, then a warm-up before the game. Irontown isn't going to do much with your pitching."

"I hope we do something with theirs," Don sighed. "They've held us down pretty hard."

"Not any harder than Andy has held them," Alex pointed out; but to Don there wasn't much consolation in that.

The boys walked down the front yard to the gate. A man rode past on a bicycle. A cloud of dust followed him.

"Hope we get some rain," Alex grunted. "The field is as dry as a bone. Wednesday, every time the ball hit the ground, there was a puff of dust, as though a shell had exploded. It will be worse Saturday."

"Maybe it will rain tomorrow," said Don.

But Friday was as dry as the days that had gone before, and Saturday dawned hot and sultry.

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Strong at breakfast. "This dust is getting into everything."

"It isn't getting into Don's appetite," Barbara laughed.

"I've got a tough job on my hands this afternoon," said Don. After breakfast he went down to the carpenter shop and began to work. By eleven o'clock the last screen was ready.

"Right here," said Mr. Strong, "is where this shop shuts down for a holiday. There isn't a thing to do. You get upstairs, son, and rest up for your game."

"As soon as I sweep, dad——"

"I'll do the sweeping," said his father. "You've earned a holiday. If you can pitch baseball as good as you can paint screens, Irontown has my sympathy."

Don had a bath and came downstairs. At dinner he ate very little.

"Not scared, are you?" Barbara asked.

"Connie Mack says a pitcher shouldn't eat heavily the day he is to work," Don answered.

"When did Connie Mack tell you that?"

"Oh, I read it some place."

After dinner he donned his uniform. Then, for the first time, his pulse began to jump. Shortly before one o'clock Ted Carter whistled outside the gate.

"Everybody's going to the game," he shouted. "Wait until you see the crowd."

"Huh!" said Don. "Crowds don't bother me." But for all that he could sympathize with Andy, for it was now his turn to be nervous before a big game.

Though the game would not start until two o'clock, there was already a fringe of spectators around the field. Don sat on the bench and watched Ted wade into the practice.

"How are you feeling?" Mr. Wall asked.

"Shaky," said Don. It was all right to pretend to Ted that he wasn't afraid of crowds,

but talking to Mr. Wall was another matter.

"You'll get over that," said the coach. "Take your time at the start. Here comes Irontown."

The rival team came on the field with a jaunty air. Don frowned. What were they so cocky about? Suddenly he saw Barbara and his father standing behind third base. He smiled and waved his hand, and Barbara waved her handkerchief. He might have known that his father and his sister would be on hand to watch him today.

"Warm up," said Mr. Wall.

He and Andy stepped out and began to pitch to Alex. The high school students cheered.

The warm-up came to an end. Captain Roberts met them in front of the bench.

"They have last innings," he said.

"But they're the visiting team," cried Andy. "They ought to go to bat first."

"That's not the way we run our series,"

Roberts explained. "The team that gets the grounds for the deciding game, gives the other team the choice of innings." The captain dropped down on the bench. "Here she starts. Get ready, Lane. Don't be too anxious to hit."

"Watch out for his fast one," Ted Carter warned.

Lane, the shortstop, stepped toward the plate. He hit the first offering for a single.

"That's the way to start things," Roberts yelled. He went to bat and drove out a double. Lane and Roberts scored on Ted Carter's single, after Grunow had sacrificed. Chester had two runs to show for her first turn at bat.

"This is our day," shouted Andy Ford.

But speedily it developed that Irontown was going to have something to say about that. She, too, began to hit, and speedily had runners on second and third, and one out.

Don watched the batter who now came out.

He was of the type that pulls the left leg away, the type that is usually afraid of the ball. Just one of those in-shoots, and that batter wouldn't get a smell of the ball the rest of the day. But Don, with the determination to play the game as a scout should, pitched a straight fast ball, and the batter scratched a hit in back of second. Two runs came in, and the inning ended with the score a tie.

"That hit was a fluke," said Alex Davidson.

"It got them two runs," said Don. He dropped down on the bench. After a while he felt something on his shoulder, and looked around to see Alex's hand there. Never before, in a game, had Alex done that.

The game became a nip-and-tuck struggle. So dry and brittle was the ground that base running was almost impossible. Whenever a player moved his feet the dust arose in a cloud. And yet, for all that, the teams played snappy ball.

Twice Don had a chance to shoot over a

quick return, and three times his driving inshoot might have saved him. But always, despite the effort it cost, he played fair. On three of these occasions the batters laced him for hits.

But, thanks to Ted Carter's big bat, Chester was also in the game. At the end of the sixth inning, despite Irontown's rallies, Chester led by a score of 8 to 7.

It was hard, Don thought, to have Irontown wallop you every time you refused to try for an advantage. He knew that Ted was looking at him queerly. But he knew, too, that between every inning Alex sat with a hand on his shoulder. Gosh, how that helped!

As Chester went to bat for the seventh inning the sky began to darken with storm clouds. There was the rumble of thunder. A puff of wind stirred the dust.

"Catching isn't going to be any joke when the wind starts," said Alex. "The dust will

blow right into the faces of the catcher and the batter."

Chester did not score in the seventh. Neither did Irontown. The eighth inning told the same story. The last inning started with Chester still leading by a one-run margin.

Ted Carter, the first boy to bat, struck out. He came back to the bench complaining of dust in his eyes. McMaster and Leonard popped weakly. It was Irontown's last turn.

Now the sky was black. The rumble of the thunder was heavy and deep, and the wind was driving in sharp blasts. Every little while there would be a puff of air, and a sheet of dust would run across the diamond. Sometimes the catcher and the batter stuck it out; sometimes they ducked their heads.

Don went out for the ninth inning wishing it was over. His arm had begun to feel the strain. He tried to curve his first ball, but no

curve was there, and the batter hit for a single.

"Tie it up!" yelled the Irontown rooters; "tie it up!"

The next boy sacrificed. Then Don lost control and gave a base on balls. The next batter bunted. Don raced in for the ball, but a cloud of dust swirled around him, and he fumbled, and the batter was safe. There were three on bases and one out.

"Take your time, Don," called Ted. "No hurry; no hurry."

A cold fear gripped Don's heart. Three on the bases and only one out! A hit would take the victory out of his clutch. Oh, how he wanted to win this game!

He tried desperately to put some of the old break on the ball. The batter swung and missed. He tried again, and almost threw the ball over Alex's head. There was a crash of thunder, a puff of wind, and a cloud of dust. Ted ran out to the mound.

"Stall along," he advised. "Kill time, kill

time. Fix your shoe-lace. It will rain any moment and then you're safe."

"I—I can't," Don faltered. "That isn't fair. They must have a chance."

Ted turned and walked back to the bag slowly.

The batter fouled the next pitch. The count was two strikes and one ball.

"Oh!" breathed Don. "If I can only fool him on another."

Holding the ball up against his breast he glanced toward second base. As he stood there poised, he saw the tree tops at the edge of the field bend and sway. Next he saw a cloud of dust rise from the ground and begin to sweep toward the diamond. His heart gave a quick leap.

This was his chance—in another instant the dust would be upon the batter; he could get the ball in there, too, the batter wouldn't have half a chance.

He whirled around toward the plate.

His arm swung out, swung down, weakened and stopped. He couldn't.

The coacher at first gave a shrill cry. "Balk! Balk!"

And then the dust rushed across the diamond. The batter put up one arm to guard his eyes and backed away from the plate.

Suddenly the coacher realized why Don had stopped his pitching motion. Quietly, when the dust had settled, that coacher walked back to his box. Don looked at the umpire, and the judge of play smiled and shook his head.

"Play ball!" he cried.

Don poised again with the ball against his chest. But now a cheer had started and was running through the spectators. Don blinked his eyes. Why, what could that mean? He nodded to Alex's signal for a drop, and he tried desperately to pitch the drop of which his arm was capable.

But his cunning was gone. The ball sailed

in straight and true, a perfect mark. The batter swung. Roberts made a blind stab for the ball as it bounded toward him, but missed it. The Irontown runners raced around the bases. Chester had lost.

But, for all that, the cheer was still echoing across the field. Don, blind to everything but the sting of defeat, turned toward the bench with hanging head. And then Alex, and Ted, and Andy and the team were around him.

"That was fine," said Alex. "That was great, Don."

Ted Carter caught his hand. "I've been a mutt," he said huskily. "You're square all the way through. If I was a little younger I'd join those boy scouts myself."

Don caught his breath. They weren't blaming him for defeat; they were telling him that he had done the right thing. Gee! didn't he know a fine bunch of fellows?

He broke from them and ran toward the bench for his sweater. There sat Mr. Wall.

The boy stopped short. They stared at each other a moment Slowly the man's face broke into a smile.

"I'm proud of you, Don."

Don stared down at the ground, "I—I almost——"

"Almosts don't count," Mr. Wall said gently. "I've been watching you, Don. Suppose you get ready to take the rest of your first-class tests next week."

CHAPTER XIV

A CHANGE IN THE SIGN

A WEEK later Don had become a first-class scout. He passed his tests in a way that brought a few quiet words of praise from the members of the Local Council. Mr. Wall, when the examination was over, gave him a friendly poke in the ribs.

"Was it worth fighting for, Don?"

Don looked down at the badge. "Yes, sir. I've wanted it a long time."

Mr. Wall nodded. "I could have told you long ago what was holding you back, but I wanted you to find out for yourself. It's the thing we dig for that we hold the longest."

"Yes, sir," said Don, and ran home to show the badge to Barbara.

"It's a beauty, isn't it?" Barbara cried in

delight. Barbara never failed to grow enthusiastic over his triumphs.

"It's the finest little badge in the world," said Don. After all these months he was a full-fledged, first-class scout.

Don emerged from the June examinations with a percentage that brought a smile to his father's face. After that, for a while, he was a mighty busy boy. With the help of Barbara he dressed for the class picture. He escorted his mother to the play given by the Junior Class Dramatic Association. It seemed fitting that Barbara should accompany him to the last happening of the school year—the commencement.

During the exercises a boy brought him a note. It was from Mr. Wall, and read:

Please come to my house at ten o'clock tomorrow morning.

All the way home he wondered what Mr. Wall could want.

"Maybe he wants to find out what you're going to do now that school is over," said Barbara.

"Shucks!" said Don. "Why should he want to know that?"

"I guess Mr. Wall is the kind of man who wants to know all about his boys," Barbara answered.

Next morning, when Don came to the teacher's house, Mr. Wall was spading the garden. He leaned his spade against the stoop, and they sat on the wooden steps.

"Don," Mr. Wall said gravely, "I'm not trying to pry into your affairs, and I have a reason for the questions I will ask. You won't mind answering, will you?"

"No, sir."

"Good. What are your plans?"

"I'm going to work," said Don.

"For the summer?"

"No; for good."

Mr. Wall nodded his head and stared across

the garden. "Do you like schooling?" he asked presently.

"I like it now," said Don.

"Do you mind telling me why you're going to work?"

"Because they need the money at home," Don said simply. "I've done a lot of thinking lately. Beth has lost her place at the bakery and hasn't found anything else to do, and her three dollars a week makes a difference. Of course, I've helped dad with the screens, but the screen business is about over. I guess I can study nights."

"As I understand it," Mr. Wall said, "you feel that you ought to earn some money. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir."

"The kind of work doesn't make much difference, does it?"

"No, sir."

"Suppose there was a way for you to earn money and stay at school?"

"Oh!" cried Don. He jumped to his feet. "Is there a way, sir?"

"There may be," said Mr. Wall.

And then he told the boy about two local Audubon societies in their State that were asking for models for bird houses.

"Send each society a model," Mr. Wall advised, "and tell at what price you are willing to make houses similar to the model. If you got a good stock of orders, you could make your money that way."

"But nobody would want to buy my bird houses," Don said incredulously.

"Your houses are strongly and simply built," Mr. Wall said quietly, "and they are cheap. Send off your models. Your profit is twenty-five cents on each house. That's about right, isn't it, Don?"

"I guess I could make about thirty cents if I bought my material in quantities," Don answered.

"If you get these orders you'll need to buy

in quantities," Mr. Wall said. "When can you start on the models, today?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then get started. You know what they say about the early bird? Good luck, Don."

"Thank you, sir," said Don.

His head was in a whirl as he walked home. Mr. Wall had said the societies would order in quantities. What did that mean? Fifty bird houses? Seventy-five?

He told the news to Barbara, and to his mother, and to his father, and to Beth. His father sat on the bench and thoughtfully felt the edge of a chisel.

"So you were going to go to work, were you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"At the mill. I guess I could get a job there."

"You hadn't said anything to me about going to work."

Don flushed. "I—I didn't want to say anything to you, sir. I thought you'd want to keep me at school, and I didn't see how you could."

And then his father said a perfectly incomprehensible thing.

"Don," he asked slowly, "I wonder if you realize how much that scout badge you wear means?"

"N—no, sir," said Don, mystified. "Can I try my bird houses on these Audubon societies?"

His father laughed. "I'd like to see anybody try to stop you," he said.

So Don set to work to make two more houses. Carefully he measured and carefully he sawed and cut. There weren't going to be any poor joints on this job.

But when the houses were finished, his enthusiasm melted away. They looked so absolutely plain, so unattractive, that he was filled with doubt just as he had been before tak-

ing his original model to the troop meeting.

"What do you think of them?" he asked his sister. "Tell me honestly, Barbara."

"I think they're the neatest little houses I ever saw," said Barbara. "I've been reading up about these two Audubon societies. They want to distribute bird houses free so that people in their towns will begin to think more about the birds. What they want is a good house that is also a cheap house, and that's what you have."

"Oh!" said Don. "I hadn't thought about that." He became more hopeful, and boxed the houses, and addressed them, and carried them down to the express office.

That night he wrote a letter to each society. Next morning he mailed it. Then came days of waiting.

He got so that he knew the minute when the postman was due on his street. But at the end of ten days no word had come to him. He went to Mr. Wall.

"Patience, Don," the Scoutmaster laughed. "Yours wasn't the only model received."

"Doesn't it look bad," the boy asked, "not hearing from them in so long a time?"

"Of course not. Keep up your courage."

Another week passed. And then, on a glorious Monday morning, the postman gave him two letters. He took one peep at the envelopes, and then bolted into the carpenter shop.

"I've heard from them," he shouted. "Dad! Barbara! Mother! I've heard from them."

"Have they accepted your model?" his father asked.

"Oh!" said Don. He felt faint. He hadn't thought that these letters could be anything but orders. Suppose, instead, they were notices that his models had been shipped back to him?

Barbara and his mother had come down to the shop. He broke the seal of the first let-

ter. A moment later he danced wildly around the shop.

"They want three hundred," he shouted. "Three hundred, dad!"

They held a glorious celebration. The second letter proved to be an order for two hundred. Five hundred bird houses all told.

"When must you complete delivery?" his father asked.

Don read the letters. "January 1 next for the three hundred," he said, "and January 15 for the two hundred. I can make that easily, can't I, dad?"

"Easily," said his father.

Of course Mr. Wall had to be told. Don rushed off breathlessly. Mr Wall slapped him on the shoulder.

"I told you to keep up your courage. And five hundred won't be all the orders you'll get. There'll be a little dribble of orders for one, or two, or three. You'll make over six hundred before Christmas."

"Will I?" Don demanded eagerly. "Then I'll make——"

"Suppose you see what your material will cost," Mr. Wall advised. "Show your letters and they'll give you all the material you want."

So Don took his letters to the lumber office. There a kindly old gentleman read them, and glanced at him two or three times, and ended by figuring out just how much stuff he'd need. Next Don got his cost.

When he reached home Barbara asked him where he had eaten dinner. He stared blankly.

He said "Cracky," with a laugh. "I forgot all about dinner." And he would not eat until he had figured out his cost per bird house. He would make a profit of twenty-seven cents on each.

"That's one hundred and thirty five dollars," he said. "And if I get another hundred orders—Mr. Wall says I ought to—that will

make twenty-seven dollars more, or one hundred and sixty-two dollars all told. Wait until I tell dad."

"You tell dad later," Barbara ordered. "Eat your dinner."

Don ate. Downstairs in the carpenter shop there wasn't a sound.

"Where is dad?" he asked.

"He's around," said Barbara.

But later, when Don went downstairs, his father wasn't in the shop. As he walked toward the entrance his father entered carrying a paint pot.

"What were you doing, dad?" Don asked.

"Painting the sign," said his father.

Don looked surprised. "Did it need painting so soon?"

"I thought I'd do a little something with it," said his father.

Don produced his figures. "If I had worked in the mill," he said, "I would have got twelve dollars a month the first year or

one hundred and forty-four dollars. This way I make one hundred and sixty-two dollars. Suppose we send Beth to school?"

"What school?" his father asked.

"Business school," said Don. "I don't want her waiting on people behind a counter for three dollars a week. Maybe the mill could use a stenographer next fall. Can't we send her, dad?"

"I guess we can," said his father slowly. "Come out and see the sign."

Don walked out. He thought it strange that his father should be so particular about the sign. And then he saw it:

ROBERT STRONG & SON,
CARPENTERS AND JOINERS,
WINDOW SCREENS AND SCREEN DOORS,
BIRD HOUSES.

"Any boy who can bring in a profit of one hundred and sixty-two dollars and build up a screen business is worth a place in the firm," said his father.

They walked back to the shop in silence. For the moment Don couldn't speak. Think what all this meant—time for schooling, time for scout work. Soon, he knew, the troop would be big enough to warrant another assistant scoutmaster. He thought that Alex Davidson would get the post, and he wondered if he would be made patrol leader.

What a lot of changes had come in a year. He and his father were pals, and Barbara—

"That sign isn't complete," he said.

"No?" His father gave him a playful push. "What does it lack?"

"It lacks Barbara's name," Don said stoutly. "Barbara's a member of this firm."

FRIENDS
OF ACPL